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© NUNO LARANJEIRA



C O N T E N T S

COMMENT

My Monday morning trawl of the social media sites delivered a couple of LOL moments earlier this week. Both were at Josh Spinks' expense come to think of it as he had 'one of those days' at the sixth round of the Michelin MX Nationals at Wakes Colne. Fortunately for us, Josh is like me in the sense that he's more than able to laugh at his own misfortune which is an excellent trait to have.

The first LOL moment started out as more of an 'ooh, no way' as I showed Gav and the gang an Instagrammed video of Josh eating sh*t during qualifying. To be fair it was a nasty get off that the Heads and All Threads Suzuki pilot was fortunate to walk away from. The crash happened at a – let's say – well watered part of the Little Loveney Hall circuit so by the time Josh stopped sliding and got back to his feet he was half covered in slime which meant a trip back to the pits looking like the Creature from the Dark Lagoon. That's where the LOL moment part came in as Josh posted an image with the caption 'a lot of laughs when I came in for fresh gloves and goggles'. Okay, it's maybe not THAT funny but it still tickled me up somewhat...

The second LOL came when Josh posted an image of him chasing Buildbase Honda stand-in Billy Mac out of a bend. There's a sh*t-tonne of roost flying and for some reason Josh has his hand wedged up the front of his Troy Lee Designs helmet. It all becomes clear when you read Josh's caption – 'when you have to check if your nose is still attached mid race *grinning emoji*'.

Pretty much every racer I know can empathise with that feeling – y'know when you've been roosted so hard that you have to wonder if your nozzle, nipples or knee caps are still where you left them.

In my own riding 'career' there are three times I can vividly remember when flying rocks left me bloodied and battered.

The first was during the second moto of a 1996 South West Masters round held at Torrington. It was the day after one of the St Austell Supercross races and I was already feeling quite battered after cartwheeling through the whoops the night before when all of a sudden the middle finger on my left hand started hurting like hell.

I figured that a rock had just pinged off it or something and it'd start feeling better as the race progressed but to be honest the pain didn't let up one bit. On returning to my van I found my left glove was soaked in blood and my goggles and helmet were a right mess too – I assume from where I'd been using my roll-offs so much as I was mired in the midpack.

When I finally built up enough courage to



remove my glove I found that the entire tip of my finger had been sliced off which explained why everything was so damn bloody.

I taped a piece of torn off oily rag on it, covered that with the tip of a latex glove and then fitted handguards for race three – I'm smart like that.

The bloodiest moment of all came on a DBR photoshoot at Marshfield – the one where we got the helicopter in. Me and Wakker had been doing some jumps over a step-up when something landed right on the tip of my nose and caused it to pretty much explode. The photos make me look all tough and that though so they went on my Facebook...

But the absolute worst encounter with a roosted rock came while trail riding in The Lakes. CCM's Austin Clews took Lawless, my bad self and a group of his buddies for a guided ride and while motoring back to base down this private road at a fair old rate of knots he flicked up this huge sharp-edged monster that just hung there in the air.

I was totally transfixed on it n'all right up until it smashed into my left bicep. Holy moly that hurt and for about six weeks the whole front of my upper bicep was bruised black. No blood that time – just relentless achy pain!

It's weird though because having stopped riding a few years back I not only miss picking up those kind of ouchies but being able to laugh about the incident that brought them with my buddies too. So embrace the agony and laugh at your own misfortune while you can. As a fairly naff t-shirt once stated – 'pain is temporary but memories last forever!'...

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TONY

CAIROLI



TONY TOPS THE PODIUM ONCE MORE BUT HE'S STILL UNDECIDED IF THE 350 IS BETTER THAN THE 450 AND VICE VERSA . . .

Well here we are folks! Finally the second summer break came around and it was really needed because after the first race in July we had to face three races in a row – Loket, Lommel and Frauenfeld in Switzerland.

The first of the three races was my first time back on board the KTM SX-F 350 since Valkenswaard in 2015. A lot of people were surprised about this choice but I wanted to try using the bike again because on some tracks this bike has some advantages over the 450 but then on others not.

In the Czech Republic it was clear that the starts were crucial and I just wasn't able to get a good one on the smaller bike which affected my races. In Lommel I could start a little better and with the smaller bike it was easier to change lines quicker and to cut the ruts the way I like to in the sand. So, after a difficult race one I was able to ride a good second moto, getting back on the podium after a race that I could have won had I got a little better jump out of the gate in the first heat.

After Lommel – which I consider a home race as I live there for part of the year – we went to Frauenfeld for the first Swiss Grand Prix of my life. I've never ridden in that country before and I was expecting a classic mountain track with big up and downs but it wasn't like that at all!

The track was built on a flat field with some nice jumps and a lot of rhythm sections, full of waves, with a sticky mud that gave a lot of traction. After two days of pouring rain we were concerned about the track conditions but

everything went super well. The organizers did a really good job, allowing us to ride in ideal conditions in front of an enthusiastic crowd who were cheering from the big grand stands close to the track.

I had felt good right from the off on Friday when I went walking the track and from the first free practice to the second moto I rode as I wanted, finding good lines and nice places to pass, winning both the qualifying race and the first moto. In the second one I was easily riding in third, till the last lap, when I collided with a lapped rider, crashing and almost losing the chance to win my third Grand Prix of the year! Luckily I was able to restart and finish fifth but I can't say that I wasn't really disappointed!

I forgot to say that I won after coming back on the 450... So now the million dollar question is 350 or 450? It's too early to know which bike I will use next year but it's very important for us to test as much as possible. As most of you already know though the best possible test is a real race.

You can test for hours and hours on many different tracks, alone, with your team-mate or with other riders but there is nothing like testing during a race where the conditions just cannot be replicated in a training session. The new 350 has some good points and the bike has been developed quite a bit since last year. Luckily at KTM they have not sidelined the project just because I wasn't using the 350 and there are also many new parts to test for 2017 but the 450 it's still better on some tracks, so we will see.

After the race in Switzerland I got to spend two days by the sea with my fiancé Jill and the De Carli family but now it's time to get back in the deep sand in order to prepare for Assen – a track that I couldn't race last year due to my injury. I was there as MXGP ambassador and as a spectator and I have to say that it was really nice to see all those grandstands full of people cheering for their idols in such a great atmosphere.

I was surprised by how fast they could build a track with such an enormous quantity of sand! I hope to have fun riding there this year just before we head to the United States of America for the last two races of the year – Charlotte and Glen Helen. Most in the paddock know Glen Helen fairly well but I'm excited to see what the organizers have done for us in Charlotte 'The Temple of Speed' which normally plays host to 200mph fire breathing NASCAR machines!

A presto amici inglesi (see you soon my English friends)!



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BRYAN

MACKENZIE

A COLUMN FROM BRY THAT'S ESSENTIAL READING BUT ON A SUBJECT MATTER THAT WE NEVER WANTED TO SEE . . .

This is the easiest – yet the hardest – column I've ever had to write. Easiest because the subject picked itself but hardest purely because of the subject matter.

This season is the final year I'm going to actively compete as a 'professional' motocross rider. The end of this season will signify my last as a professional racer as I look to take a step back from full-time racing. So I have two British championship rounds left in my career in the next four weeks which will be the last where I actively compete for a championship placing.

I don't know if this will come as a surprise or not. Perhaps it will because I'm riding so strongly in the championship this season but maybe not because inevitably it has to come to an end at some point and I'm getting pretty long in the tooth.

Believe me it's been a tough decision, especially as this year has been going so awesome – I've managed to podium in three-quarters of the 24 motos I've raced so far this year across two championships – and so to think about stopping when I'm still competitive, when I say it out loud, is stupid.

But what you don't see is what it takes, and has taken, to get to this point in my career. I've raced motocross since I was six years-old which makes this my 26th year racing dirt bikes. I've raced British Championship motocross since 1993 and been visiting tracks like Lyng, Hawkstone, Foxhill, Desertmartin etc nearly every year since then. This year is my 15th season racing the Maxxis British Motocross championship!

The travel alone each weekend takes its toll on you, not so much physically but mentally as no one in the world wants to drive between four and eight hours to go racing every weekend. The motivational toll is huge – especially the four to eight hour drive home after a sh*tte result.

This off-season would also signify my 17th

pre-season prep of which I take very seriously and do thoroughly. The thought of looking down the barrel of another brutal winter of training and cycling outside for up to four hours in a day in freezing conditions with a freaking headwind just isn't appealing to me anymore. Don't get me wrong, I could do it, but only because I can make myself do it but do I really want to? Not particularly. However, I know that's what I need to do every winter for me to be me so I do it.

I've given away a lot to chase the motocross dream all my days, most notably my health. I've taken some heavy hits and picked up some injuries that will never recover. Those take their toll which are getting more difficult and awkward to deal with as I get older – I'll be 32 years-old by the time the '17 season starts – and the truth of the matter is I don't care for injuries anymore.

I don't think there is ever a time when a rider wants an injury but they're accepted as part of the job and the biggest inconvenience is the fact that you're not getting to race for a while. But now, I can't be bothered with the pain! Plain and simple, I'm not scared to get hurt, I just can't be bothered with that part of it anymore and I say that after missing two/three weeks of bike time with a torn ankle ligament as we speak. It sucks.

I've also achieved a lot of what I hoped for from my career and hit some pretty big milestones of which I'm very proud of. True, I've never won a Maxxis British championship, but, I'm very much in the fight for it this season and win or lose come Foxhill at least I know that I at least made it to fight for the title for a season and at points in my time I was one of the fastest guys on the bike. Everyone dreams of winning the title, me included, and so far I've done everything but and I'm in a very strong position with two rounds to go... I can't be disappointed with that.

But I suppose the main motivator behind this

decision is my daughter. By the end of the season my own little girl will be here and if truth be told I'm really excited for her coming. She's the new most important thing to me and I don't want to miss a thing.

I'm not quitting dirt bikes, I'm just reordering what is the most important thing to me. Sure, I make money racing but I don't need to race to make money. I race to succeed and to succeed to the level I expect for myself I have to prepare fully and take risks. If I'm not going to be doing that I wouldn't dream of pretending to someone that I am just to cash a few cheques – results mean more to me because as I said I can make money doing something else.

I race for the results and the happiness that success brings. I love riding and I like racing so I will always do both but now I will concentrate on my family, being home more and on the Duns Motocross track. I want to elevate the Duns track game, the business and the races that come race with me and I can't do that without committing more time to it than I do now.

So this isn't a goodbye. I'm still going to be about I'm sure but in what capacity I don't know. I just won't be such a familiar face that I have been on the tour for so long.

But for the moment – and until next month – I've got two rounds of the Maxxis to run and a championship to contend for, as well as a little girl to expect.

I'll speak to you next month.

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STEVE

HOLCOMBE

WHILE THERE'S PLENTY OF RACING STILL TO BE DONE THIS YEAR OUR STEVE TAKES A MINUTE TO REFLECT ON WHAT'S AHEAD IN 2017

Finland. Spain. Italy. Hungary. Slovakia. Mexico. Great Britain. France. Germany... Not a list of places I've raced this year, or next year's summer holiday wish list, but the full list of countries the Enduro World Championship will visit in 2017.

I touched on next year's calendar last month but now I've had a little time to think about the proposed championship and alterations to the series I figured I'd try and explain what's what as far as I understand it.

Compared to the MXGP schedule the Enduro World Championship calendar might not look that remarkable, but, as a racer next year's series is certainly an interesting and somewhat controversial, one. Depending on how you view it there are a number of definite highlights and stand out events. For me they're Finland, Mexico, Great Britain and Germany. Here's why...

Starting the series in Finland is the thing that's got most people talking. The series has started with a winter race once before, but this, from what I've been told by people in Finland, will likely be very different. It's a hugely significant event in Finland – think the Finnish equivalent of The Welsh Two Day Enduro – that doesn't follow a 'traditional' enduro format. Basically, there's going to be a load of very long, potentially very snowy enduro tests, none that we ride twice. We race up one side of a huge lake, and then back down the other side to the finish in Helsinki. It's going to be interesting.

Mexico is the series' only flyaway race and only non-European stop. For that reason alone it's going to be an interesting one. Certainly going to be a bit harder to get to than this year's overseas race in Morocco.

The GP of Great Britain is going to be a

special one for obvious reasons. Fair play to Paul Eddy for putting his balls on the line and taking on the event. Not only is it going to be great to get a race at home, as it were, but the fact that it'll be the first ever sprint/cross-country combo style weekend in the history of the EWC, well, it's going to be an exciting few days at Hawkstone Park. Although I've not done that much cross-country racing in recent years I've certainly done my fair share of sprint events, so I'm definitely looking forward to it.

Finally, Germany is going to be another important event. The Zschopau classis is another long-standing race, which I think is the biggest enduro in Germany. Firstly, it's going to be a big change for the series not to have the final round in France, where it's been for years and years now. Secondly, because it's a pretty tough race held at a time of year when the weather's anything but predictable, it could well prove to be the sting in the tail for the championship.

Interestingly, the International Six Days Enduro is no longer at the end of the season and is back more or less mid season, which will again make things interesting.

Also for 2017 there's going to be a shake up – another shake up – of the class structure at EWC events. Basically, this year the Enduro 1, Enduro 2 and Enduro 3 classes that everyone's pretty much used to now were kept as they've always been with an overall EnduroGP class added into the mix.

The idea was that the overall EnduroGP title would kind of be the result of all classes added together. As I understood it the class would give an overall result that would make things a little easier for people that maybe aren't 100% up to speed with the ins and outs of enduro to better

understand things. One overall winner, kinda like at extreme enduro events.

One of the biggest changes this year, which most riders weren't expecting, was that each event has started as per the overall championship standings. It's been good for me because it's meant that I've been at the front of all races. But it's taken a little getting used to.

For 2017 things are changing again. And it seems the steps made to simplify things are, to a certain extent, going to be undone. EnduroGP is the overall winner this year, as well as the 'new' name for the series. Next year EnduroGP is the name of one of the two senior classes, along with Enduro 2, which used to be Enduro 1. Confused? That's not surprising.

Basically, the world championship will have two senior classes – EnduroGP, for over 250cc bikes, and Enduro 2 for up to 250cc bikes. As far as I understand it there's no overall combined class result anymore, although there very well might be by the time the first event rolls around.

Back to this year and it's the British Enduro Championship that's been my focus of late. Although I wasn't able to get the win – a few too many crashes put an end to my chances of that – the recent event in the Isle of Man was fantastic. Jumping on a ferry to get to a BEC race put everyone in high spirits and the organising team that ran the race deserve a huge pat on the back. It's great to know that there are organisers out there that are still fired up and willing to take the plunge and put on great events. Ciao for now. Steve

Holcombe #70



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DANIEL GROVE



OUR FACTORY SPECTATOR TURNS MEDIA FREELOADER WITH A TRIP TO A FOX PRODUCT LAUNCH...

At the end of last month I signed off saying that I was due to attend the European launch of the 2017 Fox MX/Enduro gear. Which I did and it was awesome! Certainly one of the coolest things that I've done relating to dirt bikes since I first started riding back at the turn of the millennium – partly down to the fact the I got to follow and watch extreme enduro legend Taddy Blazusiak on an enduro ride that I took part in but I'll get to that a bit further on...

With the Scott MTB ride that I covered in last month's magazine this was my second media gig so I kinda knew what to expect to a degree but as I'm new to the game I thought I'd share my insights of what happened over the day so we're all in the same boat. Very few people get the lucky opportunities that I have over the last couple of years and I'm sure as sh't making sure that I don't get above my station and turn into a proper d'ckhead. I just thought it would make good reading by sharing what goes on at one of these media launches which seem to be all the rage at the moment don't they?

The European launch of the 2017 Fox MX and Enduro range took place down in South Wales back in late July. Obviously I don't have much experience with many media events however Fox put on such a great event that it's going to take some beating should I get lucky enough to be forwarded an invite for something else in the future.

The agenda included a hotel stay for the night prior with a three course meal as well as a free bar but as there was a lot of riding to do the next day and given that it was a Monday night no one went to town on this – but it was certainly a nice inclusion. The next day was to start with a full 'Welsh' breakfast and then it was off to the Dave Thorpe Honda Off Road Centre where a presentation of the 2017 MX and Enduro gear lines were to be revealed. Following the presentation we had a two hour ride planned on the centre's Honda CRF250XRLs followed by a stop for lunch and ended with a 90 minute ride to round out the day.

I travelled straight from work as it was a short distance away and once checked in it was time for a quick shower and then straight downstairs for the meal at 8pm. I had no clue who or how many people were going to be in attendance and as I'm new to this game I just assumed that everyone knew each other – a bit like they did at the Scott MTB ride – however this wasn't the case.

There were fellow media folk flown in from France, Spain, Holland and Germany (and maybe others that I didn't get the chance to talk to or find out where they were from) but nobody seemed to know each other that well although I knew Dave Willet and Adam Wheeler so that helped ease my nerves a little. I also got to know a Dutch lad called Kay-Arne Bulsink who

was the Dutch rookie enduro champion last year and he knew a lot about Herlings so he was cool and interesting to talk to.

Once we sat down for the meal I realised that I was sat opposite Taddy Blazusiak and I had no clue that he would be attending. I don't really follow enduro – extreme or otherwise – but I would say that he's a household name in households that contain off-road riders.

I'm not sure if it was because it was all off the record but he was one funny guy and had plenty of stories to tell! It was a cool and surreal time and as he's multilingual he had the craic with everyone there and seemed to understand the humour from each country going by the other guy's reactions and also that of the Brits in attendance as his English was really good. His eating skills matched his enduro skills but he was talking about the amount of training that he does and obviously the more training you do the more you need to refuel your body and you can tell by looking at him that he's not a slacker in the physical training department.

Following the meal Dave Thorpe bought me a pint which was unexpected but certainly appreciated as I'm well aware of his achievements and he made the time for a chat – to be fair he made time for everyone as he was also a top bloke – and we talked about his team and riders for a bit which was cool.

After breakfast the next morning we headed to Dave's HQ where everyone in attendance signed on for the ride and attended the presentation of all the 2017 products followed by a Q&A session. There was some awesome cinematography included which you've probably seen by now, the video that includes Roczen, Dungey, Carmichael, Savatgy, and Forkner, which is one of the best short films I've seen for ages.

The 2017 motocross gear has been available for a few weeks now however the Enduro line which is released next week is next level. Some serious thought and time has gone into the construction of their enduro line with Blazusiak's input for 2017 but unfortunately I can't tell you the full details because of the this issue's print date. But I can assure you that there will plenty of enduro riders running the new enduro offerings from Fox next year it's that good.

Again, going back to how lucky I am, all members of the media in attendance were presented with a new Fox gear bag that contained a full set of the new enduro line that we were to wear on the rides and at the end of the day we could take it home too! It was pretty funny I think as 15 riders all in matching gear were going to be riding around South Wales so it may have looked like some sort of invasion!

As I ride motocross predominantly I'm putting some plans in place to revisit the Dave Thorpe Honda Off Road Centre to make further use of the enduro gear

however most of it will cross over into motocross so I'll certainly be making use of my new Fox gear over the coming winter months.

Luckily Suttly knew all my sizes and everything fitted perfectly and I didn't have to swap anything and once everyone was geared up and ready it was time to start riding. The morning ride of two hours saw us on some privately owned land so it was just us Fox clad riders tearing around some awesome trails in the Welsh woodland.

Stephen Sword, Luke Hawkins, and Dave Thorpe were on hand on and led the group around the hillside taking in all sorts of obstacles from stream crossings and even riding along them, log crossings, steep climbs and even some motocross style doubles thrown in! We also rode through some densely branched trees to give the new clothing a proper test which was the idea of the ride and mine was completely unmarked afterwards.

I managed to tuck in behind Blazusiak for about 20 minutes – who had a brand new KTM delivered that morning for the ride – and his bike skills are something else! There really aren't many YouTube videos of him for some reason but riding with him and watching him is something that probably won't happen again and this was certainly the highlight of the day for me. He was riding up and over six foot boulders like he was on a trials bike and getting up some seriously steep banks that looked impossible to ride up and watching it first hand was something that I won't forget in a hurry.

After the morning ride we visited a local pub for lunch where a buffet was waiting for us and then we headed back for some more riding. It was a little weird for me being amongst some of the guys in attendance. For example I watched Swordy race from when he turned pro in 1996 to when he knocked it on the head in 2013 so I knew everything about him from a racing perspective but he had no clue who I was. He was cool though and took an interest in everyone there. It did make me wonder if my fellow journos knew who he was as I'm not sure they did apart from the other Brits in attendance. He certainly seems happy with life after racing and why wouldn't he be...

After the afternoon ride it was back to HQ where there was a quick debrief, some feedback given to the guys from Fox about the new gear and then it was time to get changed and head home after a whirlwind 24 hours!

A huge thanks must go to Elisa, Sandro, and Johann for the great hospitality and to Mohsin for the invite to an unforgettable experience...

Daniel Grove

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JAKE

NICHOLLS



JAKE POPS IN A STRONG PERFORMANCE AT LOMMEL THEN GETS ALL LARRY LOOPOUT AT FRAUENFELD

First of all I would like to thank a few people for my feature in last month's magazine. It has been a long time since I had such a thing and I don't think I've ever had a special piece like that before. Special in the sense that I guess it's the first time I've spoken about a lot of things to anyone apart from my wife and I haven't spoke to anyone ever about the strain it had put on us at times.

Adam Wheeler has always been a good listener and he's a good bloke too so spilling the beans to him felt very natural and it was actually quite nice to do. And obviously sometimes things can read different to how they were said but I think it came across exactly how it is. Also thanks to Ray Archer for the cool lifestyle and riding shots and Nuno for the rad cover photo. And last but not least Suttly for piecing it all together like he did and for actually putting it into the magazine – I really appreciate it and it meant a lot to me.

I think it showed a different side to what goes on in a rider's career. Don't get me wrong it's certainly not the first feature of its kind, far from it, but I think a lot of people reading this know me to say hello to and I generally have a yarn to most people that come up so it's good for them to see the crap side of the last couple years.

Anywayyyy... It's been a bit up and down since my local Maxxis round at Blaxhall. We went to the Czech Republic where I had my worst meeting of the year to date on one of my more comfortable tracks. The first practice was mega and I felt good straight away – and ended up 11th – but then it went sour with freak goggle and technical issues meaning a DNF and a 21st on race day after pitting for goggles five minutes into race two while in 15th. I've never pitted for goggles in my life but that track is story and I was in a fight for 10th and 450 roost is no joke. It just wasn't worth it!

From there we went to Lommel – a place I don't really love that much to be honest. I lived there for two and a half years and rode there so much that I'm pretty over it. I've only ridden

there twice this year compared to every other GP rider's 150 visits. But I wasn't putting any emphasis on that one race – why should I? I've ridden there so many times and I haven't forgotten how to ride sand. I was second behind Herlings for two years in a row in the Dutch championship plus when I put so much emphasis into the MXoN there in 2012 I sucked ring all weekend.

And my strategy worked. I rode the best I ever have around there although my sand conditioning let me down a tiny bit at the end of the races. I was unlucky to miss the top 10 in the first race after crashing while in ninth with four laps to go and in the second one I was going good until I ran out of tear-offs with five minutes to go. I was tired too but I gave up three positions just because I couldn't see a thing.

I left there happy as the track was so tough and I wasn't fazed by it at all – and my suspension was pretty dialled. Next year I need to ride in sand a little more early in the season and I think it will help secure a better end to the races there.

Myself and Blu didn't actually have a way of getting back from Lommel as I was forced to fly to Eindhoven on the Wednesday before and went straight to the practice track with Ian Browne who had my race bike. I couldn't get the tunnel or a boat crossing all week so it was my only choice and Blu did the same journey but on Friday evening.

So to get home we jumped in with Steve Fry – the everything man of the team and an all-round legend that loves motocross so much he explains it as being like Christmas every weekend. He lives near Bournemouth so I couldn't expect him to drive all the way up to Ipswich from Dover and then back down again so my mate Ollie met us at the Maidstone services at on1am on Monday morning – what a guy! It takes a lot of good people/friends to make a motocross team and a rider's life work and it's thanks to people like this that we can do what we do!

I will admit that Lommel ripped the nuts out of me and on Tuesday I came over a bit poorly with a sore throat and I still felt knackered. I tried to ride a bit on Wednesday as I wasn't feeling too bad but it didn't work – my chest couldn't keep up with my heart's demands. I rested up and by Sunday I felt back to normal.

Saturday was a steady day in Switzerland as I still felt a bit chesty and the track was pretty gnarly. We struggled also with bike set-up a lot and the dirt was so deep! On Sunday I felt good and Warm Up went well. We made some big changes to the bike and it felt way better.

First race was going okay. I was 15th but feeling pretty good and each lap was getting better then through the fast rollers I Villopotoed it and came straight off the back destroying my bike in the process. That was the end of that race.

I was fired up for the second one and came out swinging. I was sixth out of the first turn and when sitting in eighth two laps in we had another totally freak bike issue which was the end of my race. I was pretty gutted but at the same time it was going really well until then so what can you do?

It was really nice to have a weekend off. I was pretty run down last week after being ill so I had the whole week off. My body needed it badly and I feel a bit better for it. We have two rounds of the British championship left and three world rounds – two of which are in America.

I highly doubt I will be racing at the MXoN. The team hasn't been announced yet but it should be Tommy, Max and Shaun. It was between Shaun and I recently but at the last three GPs he has outclassed me. That's probably expected at Lommel and as I've explained the other two rounds weren't very straight forward for me. But hey, we'll see. I might get picked and if I do I will sure as hell give it some muscle.

Thanks for reading folks.
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NEWSHOUND

Graeme Irwin adds the MX Nationals title to the British Masters one he picked up in wonderful Whitby

BUILDBASE HONDA RACK UP THE TITLES, INJURY WOES FOR ELLIOTT BANKS-BROWNE AND JESSY NELSON AND A LOOK AT WHICH TEAMS ARE HOT AND WHICH ARE NOT AS THE MXON LOOMS ON THE HORIZON . . .

Graeme Irwin has been having an exceptional debut season for Dave Thorpe's Buildbase Honda team this year confirmed by the two national titles he's already secured – the Pirelli British Masters and Michelin MX Nationals. For the most part it was plain sailing for the Irishman, clocking up numerous runaway victories, but at the penultimate round of the MX Nationals – Wakes Colne – he demonstrated the toughness he's renowned for and actually competed with a broken thumb to clinch the title courtesy of a third place in moto one before sitting out the rest of the day. It's not confirmed yet but expect Irwin to be the lead rider awesome year!

Martin Barr also followed in his team-mate's footsteps as he too clinched the British Masters title in the MX2 class and is a shoo-in for the MX Nationals championship as he's lost only one moto this season in the series and needs just seven points at the final round to cakewalk the MX Nationals championship, too. Barr has been at the pointy end of every race this year and the two titles are a reflection of his strength and as one of his competitors I tip my hat to him on a brilliant year.

Honda has released images and specs on their new CRF450R for 2017. The Japanese giants are the first of the oriental manufacturers to offer electric start on their machines as you can spec your new Honda to come with electric start for around an extra £600 I believe. Additionally they are bringing back spring forks too after a divide in opinion of air forks which have been becoming more prominent these past few years. They have also changed the chassis and motor claiming complete improved performance all around and come standard with a titanium fuel tank – that's cool.

Jake Shipton had a breakout ride at the penultimate MX Nationals picking up his first ever professional race event overall victory – with a double race win, no less. Shipton has always shown huge potential and is super naturally talented on the bike but never quite realised it fully. Starting work this year with MX trainer to Conrad Mewse, Justin Morris, Borris has pushed Jake on and his speed this year has been unquestionable but more notably now he's got the distance. If he can carry this momentum he'll take another step up the ladder to end the season going into 2017.

Elliott Banks-Browne is just sh*t out of luck

it seems. He's like the rubber man the amount of times he has to bounce back from injury yet doesn't bounce so well on the ground. Unfortunately for EBB his latest soil sample was a heavy one and he suffered some fairly gnarly internal injuries – lacerated liver and collapsed lung – resulting in a long stay in hospital and completely ending his season. Elliott will be back again next year though as he has already stated on Instagram he isn't sure on what colour team.

Billy Mac made a short comeback too to fill in for the absent Kristian Whatley under the Buildbase rig. 'Big Jock' rode at the Whitby Masters and Wakes Colne Nationals just for fun. Those of you from north of the border might have seen the former two-time British champ bopping around at practice tracks lately on his CRF450R showing some pretty immense speed but I can assure you it's all just for a bit of fun and fitness and no comeback is on the cards. The old Mac211 is concentrating on his X-Axis company which focuses on lifestyle and cafe racer builds.

Malcolm Rathmell Sport have been victims of Tom Thievery as an artic lorry bound for MRS HQ was robbed as it cooled its jets in Leicester

Monster sign up Tim Gajser



DANNY'S DOUBLE TOP!

MCCANNEY'S THE MANX MASTER AS THE BEC HITS THE IOM...

Husqvarna's Danny McCanney claimed a double victory when the British Enduro Championship visited the Isle of Man for the first time.

Making it a home win for the Manxman, McCanney was certainly the worthy winner of rounds three and four of the series, fending off championship leader Steve Holcombe for the top step of the podium. Returning to action after a lengthy break, McCanney knew that his local round of the series was the best time to attack and that's exactly what he did.

With Holcombe laying down the law on the opening test of the weekend, McCanney soon hit his stride on test four and began clawing back the time lost to his Beta rival. Winning the final four tests on Saturday he narrowly snatched the win by just one second over Holcombe.

It was the motivation he needed as he kept that flow going straight away on Sunday. Excelling on the lengthy forest based enduro test, McCanney showed his class as he continually opened up his advantage over Holcombe to take a clear and comfortable victory.

Newly crowned 125cc World Champion Jack Edmondson placed third overall both days having edged out David Knight for third on Saturday by a second.

Forest East services on the M1. The thieves got away with an abundance of limited edition grey/yellow SG12s, new limited edition trials boots and more Airh helmets than you can shake a sh*tty stick at.

MRS are looking for any info on any of the above items which have been snatched from them saying they may be easily identified as the helmets won't have the gold ACU stamp on them and the boots were just making their way into the country for the first time so if you see any they're red hot. MRS are offering a reward for any information resulting in catching the bandits - 01423 772885.

This is super-rumour stuff and by no means confirmed but I heard on the grapevine that STR/Wilvo Virus KTM are going to stop running for 2017. Apparently owner Steve Turner isn't intending on doing another season despite the amazing results and success his team has had in the past few years. What about his two riders, Shaun Simpson and Adam Sterry? Well apparently Simmo is linked to an overseas team on a blue bike and Sterry is headed to a GP-winning green team that's running factory

equipment no less.

Last month I wrote that the EMX300 (two-stroke class) had been given the bullet from MXGP for next season but as quickly as the FIM announced it they retracted it after a simultaneous sigh from manufacturers, riders and race fans. They cleared it off the schedule to try and make more time in the MXGP weekend timetable but the support it received couldn't go unnoticed and it was promptly reinstated - two-stroke fans everywhere rejoiced.

So we all know Herlings beat himself up and broke his collarbone after dominating the entire MX2 GP championship so far and underwent surgery immediately to plate the clavicle in an attempt to not miss any GPs. But, rumour has it, Herlings rode the bike the Friday prior to Loket (days after surgery) to test it and crashed again re-breaking the reinforced bone which is why an injury that was originally played down turned into him warming the bench for three GPs and seeing his points lead shrink by 126 points. Still, there's no immediate panic as he's back on the bike now and still has a healthy 43 point lead.



UNSTOPPABLE!

GRAHAM JARVIS ADDS THE BATTLE OF VIKINGS TO THIS YEAR'S WIN LIST...

The wins keep coming for Graham Jarvis, with the Husqvarna rider claiming victory at the Swedish Battle of Vikings. Fresh off his Red Bull Romaniacs win, Jarvis headed to Sweden for the annual extreme classic. With stiff competition from home favourite Joakim Ljunggren and South Africa's Wade Young, Jarvis duly did the business leading everyone home in the tough and rugged course. With wins at Erzberg, Romaniacs and now Battle of Vikings, Jarvis is certainly on a roll in 2016. Next on his hit list will be the Red Bull 111 Megawatt in Poland on September 18.



WHEELIE KING!

DL12 TO TAKE ON IOM TT COURSE
ON BACK WHEEL ONLY...

Doug Lampkin MBE's talents know no bounds as he prepares to tackle the ultimate wheelie challenge by continuously riding the Isle of Man TT course on the back wheel. With the famous road race circuit containing more than 200 corners, not to mention a literal mountain of elevation, it's one heck of a task he's set out for himself. But if anyone can do it then Dougie armed with his Yorkshire grit and determination can. The big day will be on Saturday September 24 and it's all going to be filmed live on Red Bull TV. We'll be tuning in for that!

WALKER BACK RUNNING AGAIN!

JONNY WINS FAST EDDY X-TREME CLASSIC

Jonny Walker looks to put his injury ridden 2016 season back on track with a win at the Fast Eddy X-Treme Classic. Having withdrawn from the Red Bull Romaniacs due to another knock on his injured leg, Walker got the all-clear in time to contest the recent Fast Eddy extreme race in Oswestry. Despite limited time in the saddle, Walker was firing on all cylinders as he led home a quality field of riders in the two-hour and 30 minute extreme race. Finishing close to four minutes behind, Paul Bolton – also returning from injury – placed second with Billy Bolt rounding out the top three.

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Barty Marr picks up the
British Masters crown...



Honda have an awesome new
CRF450R lined up for 2017

His future has been secured now regardless as he signed for KTM until 2020. Herlings is expected to move to MX1 next season and will continue with his current set-up and environment as he makes that transition.

After Red Bull KTM lost Herlings to injury their second guy, Pauls Jonass, fought for KTM's honour at Locket. After winning Saturday qualification Jonass came up short early in moto one on the infamous Czech step-down which is definitely unforgiving – it's a drop-off over an access road essentially and there's not much room for error. A question that had always remained unanswered to me until now – Q: What would happen if you came up short on that step-down? A: You'd go massive, knock yourself out and miss a couple of weeks is what.

Monster Energy has signed Tim Gajser as a Monster athlete. The energy drink giant swooped in and signed the reigning MX2 champion and current runaway MXGP championship leader late in the season. Gajser was one of the very few top motocross athletes without an energy drink sponsor but Monster managed to sign the champion up which is very familiar to last season when they did the same thing with Romain Febvre at roughly the same point in the year when it was

looking likely that he was going to win the championship...

Jessy Nelson has sadly had a career threatening injury while racing at Unadilla in the States. Nelson is a front runner and factory KTM pilot for the TLD team and had an unspectacular crash coming into a turn during the second moto. Unfortunately, the awkwardness of the incident and the way the bike came over him resulted in a severely damaged spine and loss of feeling from the waist down. Thankfully he regained some feeling prior to surgery but the extent of his recovery is still totally unanswerable but lets just hope the surgeons can help him recover as close to 100 per cent as possible.

MXoN fever is starting to flair up again as the event draws closer to kicking off in Maggiora, Italy on September 25. Teams are now starting to be confirmed and the bench racing commencing as industry and race fans spout predictions.

At the moment Belgium and France are likely to start as favourites. Strijbos, Van Horebeek and Desalle are a formidable team on their day, however, the latter is still returning to his full potential after a hard season knocked by injury. Strijbos – who won his first GP in nine years at Lommel – will



Our thoughts are with Jessy Nelson who slammed hard at the recent Unadilla National

again ride MX1 for the team and Van Horebeek who has a great history at the event on an MX2 bike in recent years will run on the 250F once more.

France initially looked likely to field Paulin, Ferrandis and Febvre but Ferrandis pulled from the event after an injury ended his season. He was replaced by Paturel who is a GP podium guy himself – strong! Febvre is always going to be worthy of his place on the team and no question mark over his ability to perform for team France and Paulin is a big game performer who always does well at the biggest event of the year.

Team GB is likely to be Tommy Searle, Max Anstie and Shaun Simpson. Max has found unbelievable form late in the season after a sketchy first half to the year in his debut season for the factory Husky MX2 team but all his stars are aligned right now and he's slayin' it with two double race win back-to-back GP victories.

Shaun and Simmo are performing super awesome in the National championship and had some great rides in the GPs too. You could argue that Nicholls and Wilson are worthy of a place on the team at the expense of Simmo or Searle but without taking anything away from their performances this season – Jake has

elevated himself back up to the duos level at British Championship after coming back from a couple of nightmare seasons. On paper I think the team of Searle, Anstie and Simmo is the right choice for this season.

The home nation of Italy would be a potential podium candidate if they could dig up a solid third rider. Currently odds are that Cairoli will spearhead the team and TM rider Samuele Bernadini will more than deservedly earn the MX2 birth but the pickings for the open class are slim.

Team USA are again sending a team a little short of their very best. Dungey and Tomac have not made themselves available for the event and so Jason Anderson – who hasn't raced for a couple of months due to injury – will lead the team to Italy. Alex Martin – not two time national champion Jeremy Martin – will hold the MX2 bike WFO for team USA and has been to the MXoN before racing for Puerto Rico while Cooper Webb will again ride Open class for the yanks. Webb is the man for the job all day long, Alex Martin was a surprise choice however as too was Anderson. Barcia, who has rode the nationals all summer and been a member of team USA a few times already, was apparently never even considered for the team.

Team Switzerland could be pretty awesome

if they can field their strongest guys and each are on form on the day. Valentin Guillod, Jeremy Seewer and Arnaud Tonus could easily stomp the podium overall if selected and each turn up ready to race.

Germany, who won just a few years ago only have one certainty at this time – that being Nagl. Roczen is a question mark and beyond that it's probably Dennis Ullrich or some ADAC national series riders.

The Aussies are sending a solid team of domestic racers – Kirk Gibbs, Jed Beaton and Dean Ferris. Only Ferris has experience of racing seasons on the international stage but now serves his time back home along with the other two riders. Gibbs is the defending MX1 champ and along with Ferris is fighting for the championship again this season. It will be good to put this team up against the rest of the world to see how they stack up and get an idea of how healthy the Australian National Championship actually is.

The Dutch could also be strong if they get to go with Herlings, Brian Bogers and Glenn Coldenhoff. That team could do some damage if Coldenhoff feels up for it on the day as he has done a couple of times this season. As things stand Holland stands a real chance of getting on the podium...



DAKAR DESERT RACE

18

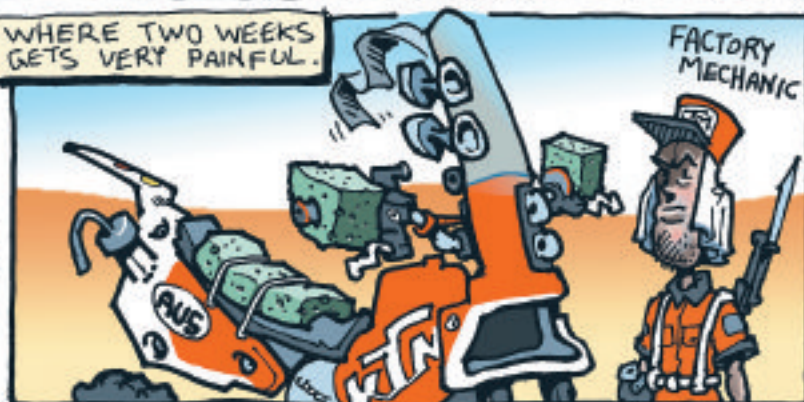
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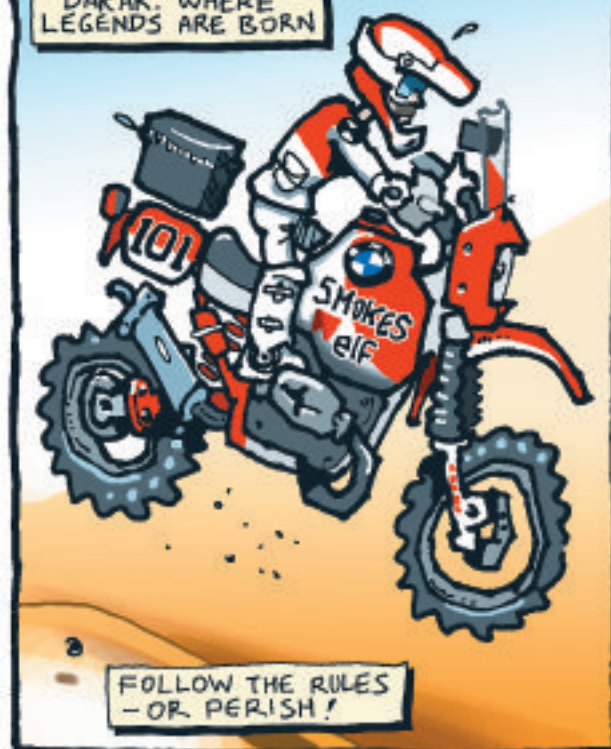
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WHERE IT'S VERY
COLD AT NIGHT.

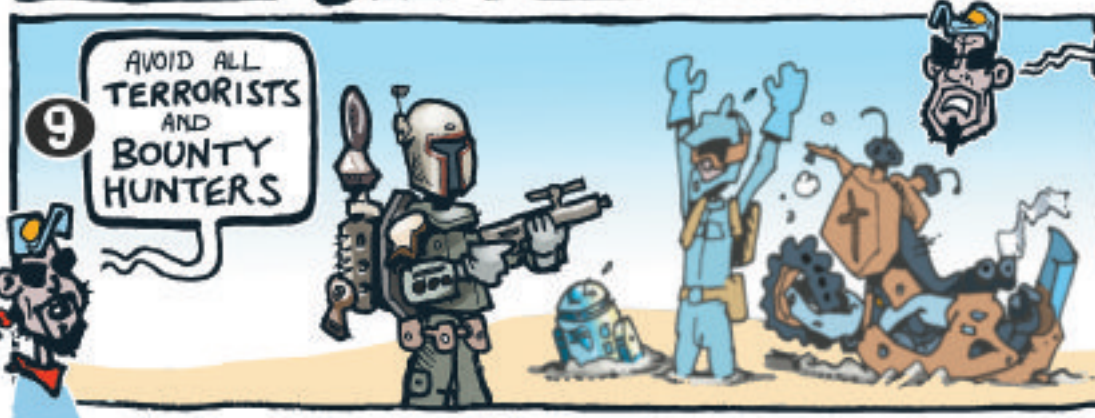
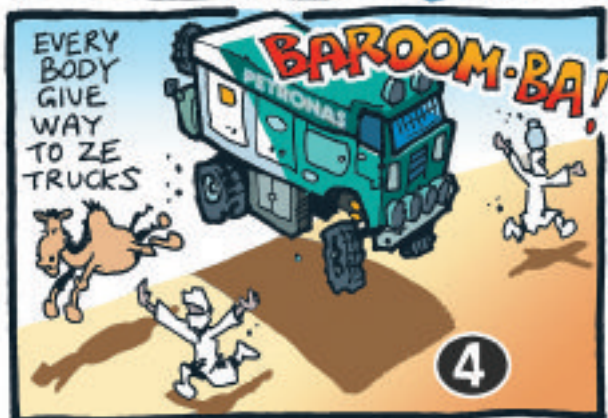
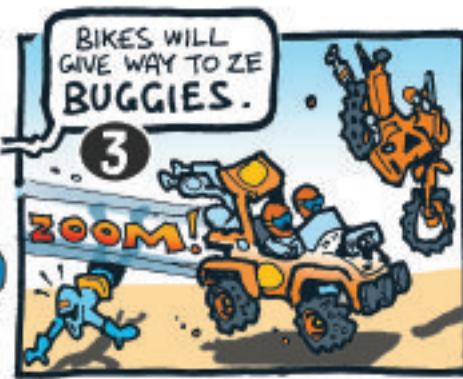
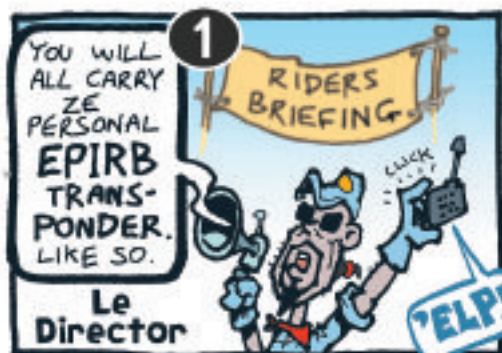


DAKAR: WHERE
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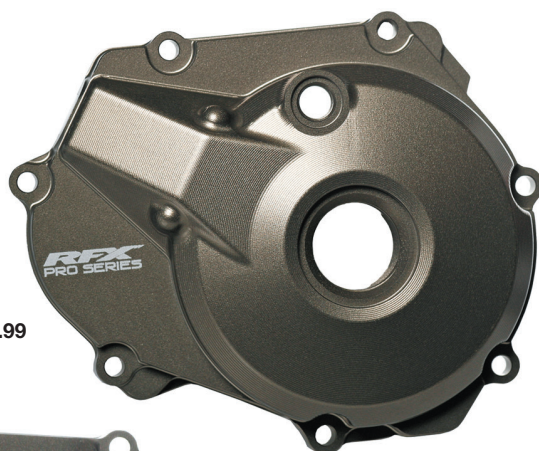


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SOME OF THE UK'S MOST SUCCESSFUL MOTORCYCLE RACERS - TOMMY SEARLE, THE LOWES TWINS, TAI WOFFINDEN AND MORE - TRAIN, EAT AND RIDE TOGETHER WHICH IS REAPING HUGE REWARDS FOR THEM ALL BOTH ON AND OFF THE TRACK...

Words by Adam Wheeler Photos by Ray Archer, Simon Cudby and Tommy Searle



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Around Derby there is a group of friends that train, push and rip into each other. It is a gaggle with a difference – a posse that involves world champions, Grand Prix winners, prize-fighters and renowned names of the motorcycle racing world. Overseen by established trainer and circuit competitor Kirk Gibbons, two of the prominent figures are Tommy Searle and Moto2 title contender and former world Supersport number one Sam Lowes.

These guys have bonded through work and the rigours and demands of racing which they largely seem to blow away through a relentless level of banter and ‘grounding’ of each other. Lowes has also rediscovered his love for the dirt even if it gives the likes of Searle and company another excuse to increase the mickey-taking. We decided to delve a bit deeper and see how top class athletes bounce off each other...

Tommy Searle is having a good giggle. I’ve just told him what soon-to-be 26 year old Sam Lowes, MotoGP-bound twin of WorldSBK racer Alex, said about his friends’ tendency to call him ‘The Russian’ on account of a close and fairly basic hair style. “He’s got a funny haircut

so he does look like a Russian,’ Searle grins. “It is the worst haircut in the world but he doesn’t really care.”

“I get rinsed for my style, my gear, everything...” says irrepressible and lightning talker Lowes but you get the impression that the Isle of Man resident can also dish it back. “Both him and Al are funny and always making jokes,” Searle explains. “When I first met them I thought ‘bloody hell, they are just full-on...’. And that was all the time. You’d be at the gym at 7am and they were already too much! They were going on about birds and this-and-that and you were like ‘it’s 7am lads...chill out a bit’.

You wouldn’t go as far to call it a ‘bromance’ but there is a curious dynamic between the Monster Energy Dixon Racing Team Kawasaki rider and Lowes who is pounding his way through an attention-catching Moto2 campaign. It comes from an amalgamation of remarkable motorcycle racing talent that gathered under the tutelage of Kirk Gibbons – Searle’s trainer for the better part of a decade.

“Al and Sam used to live with [GP, WorldSBK and current BSB racer and son of racing legend Ron] Leon Haslam – in a caravan at his house – and used to come to the gym really early,” says

Searle who relocated to the midlands around the time of his Grand Prix emergence as a 16 year old in the middle of the last decade. “They were also working as electricians with their Dad. I didn’t know much about them before that. They were obviously young and still coming up but we met through the training.”

“Leon is a good friend of ours and was racing for Airwaves Ducati when Ron came up to us in the paddock and said ‘I’d like to help you out’ which was mint because I was only 15,” Lowes explains. “We were only kids so we’d spend a lot of time at his house, train in the morning with Kirk and then go to work. As we got older we needed to get more ‘on it’ and ended up moving to Derby where you had people like a Boxer called Jack Perry, Tommy and Elliott Banks-Browne and then Mel Pocock. It was mainly us, Leon and Tommy and it was f*cking nice because we’re all different characters and Woffy [Tai Woffinden] is there now and he was like a little fat ball when he first turned up. He’s like me – quite loud in the group. We all have different sports but we still go at it together and there is camaraderie.”

The riders met and made friendships in the damp confines of a gym and along >>



Tommy's a dirt bike demon...



...while Sam Lowes is more adept on the road

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Although Sam Lowes has made a name for himself in road racing he's actually a former youth motocross champion too



vaguely similar training programmes. The disciplines of road racing and motocross might differentiate vastly but the squashing together of competitiveness, brashness and determination made for an intense chemistry. Talk about pressure...although the rivalry is not as hot as you might think.

"With Kirk it can be very intense, especially when you have all those boys in there," Searle says. "There wasn't really any rivalry though. We'd want to beat each other in the gym but obviously what Sam is doing is totally different to me. We all want each other to do well so there is no rivalry in that sense. There is fun competition in wanting to beat each other's time on the circuit and you'll come back from being away at the races and find a new mark to beat. Sam does Moto2 and I do motocross so there is not much comparison."

"Generally it is a bit of everything, some days we'll be running, cycling or doing circuits," explains Lowes who recently moved to the Isle of Man and logistically is constantly on the move. "Never really any weights but if we do then Tommy does a bit more. We have this thing called the 'motocross circuit'. It is not a session because it only takes half an hour but it is a mixture of a lot of things. A mile on an old, sh*t exercise bike that is stuck in gear, then a stripped down step machine that leaves your legs like jelly. Then on the rower for a mile, a grapple machine, ab exercises and others – I think eight with weights – and then finishing on the bench which leaves you f*cked."

"I'm quite good at it because I have short arms! So one rep is a bit less for me compared to Tommy! You do that more or less every week and on the clock and I was 'the man' this winter and I was happy with the best time – the winter before I was nowhere near. Seeing the boxers training twice a day is another side of it that's good to know and keeps you down there and working hard."

"Tommy tries hard not to be 'sound' but he is. He thinks he's good... and he is. But he gives respect...and a lot of sh*t as well but he knows how hard we all work. Motocross is a bit different because you cannot always turbo yourself in the morning because you might be riding in the afternoon whereas I'll 'leave it all' in the gym."

Searle's influence means that Lowes has rediscovered some of his fondness for dirt bikes and – typically for a road racer – that's where it all began. "I used to race motocross but never to such a high level >>



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because I was focussing on road racing,” he recalls. “From 12 to 18/19 I wasn’t riding at all but before then I won a couple of little championships. One at Norfolk and Suffolk and Elliott was second! So he’s been reminded of that a few times. Dirt biking is such good training. Doing 40 minutes on a motocross bike means getting on the Moto2 bike you’re alright.”

“My Dad was quite strict about motocross because of injuries but we’d always try and sneak off. Haslam was a good motocrosser back in the day and wanted to get back into it and so did Alex and I, and KTM helped me out with a bike so I thought ‘I’m going for it’ and now I’m really into it. I love it and went to California with Tommy in the winter.”

“He came to California and we kinda found out that everything he likes and buys is terrible and everything he doesn’t like is actually quite trendy,” says Searle unable to resist a smirk. “He didn’t want to wait a day for his boots to arrive so we stopped on the way to Pala and he must have chucked \$2,000 on new gear! He was chuffed to nuts but then makes it look awful – he is just funny. He spent four weeks riding and almost had a massive crash through over-jumping in the first couple of days but it was probably a good thing because it calmed

him down a bit.”

“I left the U.S. thinking ‘I shouldn’t ride a motocross bike ever again’ but it was fun. Up those hills at Glen Helen, flat-out. I really enjoy motocross but it’s just that lack of safety net. We all chipped in and got Ed Warren’s track changed last year because the big doubles were a bit sketchy but now it’s a bit kinder.

“The worst thing you can do as a half-decent motocrosser is go to America because they are all f*cking fast and they have style! Some dude is 10 seconds a lap slower than you but on Instagram he looks as though he’s half a lap faster!

“Of course it is harder to ride a motocross bike than a road race bike but that said road racing is not easy. It is tough. What I like about motocross is that it’s so different. You don’t have to take the same line every lap. I can really have fun and it is good focus. I feel more freedom and jumping...which is cool compared to road racing.”

Lowes estimates he was 10 to 12 seconds a lap slower than Searle around Glen Helen which is not too shabby for an athlete that cannot afford to compromise on a high profile day job. Sam’s un-chartable enthusiasm and the skilled company he keeps means that his attempts

at motocross does open him up to further mockery.

“They are such p*ss-takers...I’ll have a go at stuff and they are forever taking videos and commentating over them! I can do the jumps but I need style. I’m at the stage now where I need to ‘up’ the style.”

“He knows that on a motocross bike he doesn’t look good,” remarks Searle, another grin coming into place. “He’ll have a picture that Al or someone has taken and he’ll send it through to us saying ‘should I put this on Instagram?’ and we will be like ‘No way! Do not put that picture up!’ and he’ll reply ‘I know, it’s s*it ain’t it!’ and then ask why! He has all the best gear but makes it look bad. A bit like me on a road race bike!”

“A change of disciplines one day at Donington Park at least allowed Lowes to soak up some revenge. “The best thing that happened ever was that Tommy went on the [road racing] race school,” Lowes says. “He’s a good looking lad and he likes to look good – which is fair enough – but he had this s*it set of leathers and a s*it plain helmet and Alex and Leon were taking him around Donington.

“He was quite good actually and listened a lot but really wanted to get his knee down. I told >>



Sam and Tommy put in some laps at Glen Helen





him Melbourne Loop was his best bet as it was slow. He came around with his knee down but the bike was totally upright! It was an amazing photo! It helped me a lot because of all these pictures of me motocrossing and now I had something to give back. It was needed! In truth it actually wasn't bad for someone and their first time."

Pushing Searle for some seriousness and an assessment on Lowes the jokes momentarily stop. "I wouldn't say Sam is a good as those boys like Johnny Rea and Bradley Smith but he did not race it for as long as them. He rides quite nicely. We changed the track quite a lot for him and Al at home because the jumps were quite big and it was too dangerous. They are still a nice size but if you come up short then the landings are not so hard. Al gets a bit scarier on the bike! Sam takes his time!"

Lowes is quick to give credit and he evidently holds Searle abilities in awe. "Tommy will jump over you, drop his hand off the bars and just look at you. There is some stuff that he does that I cannot believe. His speed is unbelievable. I'd like to go to more races with him. I think he is awesome on a motocross bike and a great person. I believe he can win races and a championship – but this game is also about the bike, team and the people around you. You need that."

Does he envy the motocrosser lifestyle? "You have to ride and race so much – which I think is good for Tommy this year. I think road racing opens up a bit later [in life]. Tommy was racing and earning as a 16 year old kid. I don't envy his lifestyle but he has a good one and he deserves it. Who has ever given Herlings a run like he did? I don't envy motocrossers because they have it tough. Do I wish I could look like them on a bike? Yes!"

Perhaps what Searle and Lowes don't need (or perhaps do) is the constant reminder of their failings. The jokes and japey seem unwittingly designed to keep everyone with their feet on the ground but it is also a consistent method of communication between close friends sometimes separated by continents.

"We have a group chat between us called 'Barry's Lad' because Freddie Sheene is in it and every time we used to go out people would say that to him so now that's who he is," Searle explains. "So there are a lot of jokes but when we're racing then there are a lot of positive messages. Sam has a lot of self belief and Al is the same but if there is a struggle but they both help each other a lot and they are two very upbeat people."

"I don't think anyone has ever put an un-sarcastic comment on the group chat," Lowes says. "Freddie was always 'Barry's lad' at any bike event he turned up to with us so it just stuck. You get good comments but then you'll have a 'well done Sam...but what



It's not just cops who like donuts!



Sam has a wheelie good time at the Goodwood Festival of Speed



happened to your English?' just because you tend to sound a bit more European when you're talking with all the international press. I remember Tommy copping some s*it recently because the gate dropped and he went out slow to cut to the inside...we were all saying to him that it was still his best start of the year!"

Lowes, a British and World Supersport Champion, is a fantastic and rapid talker and in a separate interview he admits he is living his dream at the forefront of MotoGP. His Moto2 season has it the heights of a spectacular win at Jerez and the troughs of crashes in Germany and Austria but he is destined for MotoGP on the factory Aprilia and it is hard to find a more vibrant person in the paddock. Searle is in a slightly different place in his career but success in the British Championship this year and on the verge of completing a full Grand Prix season for the first time since 2013 means his path is back on an upward trajectory.

Both have experienced the full range of emotions and sensations of motorsport at the highest level and also the pain, frustration and mental difficulties of trying to reach and stay at the top. "Sam is very confident in what he does and has a lot of self-belief," Searle opines. "It is the same game. We are not going to be telling each other how to go around a turn but I think most sports are very mental and so it doesn't matter what you do."

"We've had some chats but Tommy is a proud person and he wouldn't like to have those talks in front of people," reckons Lowes. "We had a nice chat when he came to Assen last year. He's seen me train and knows a lot about me and we respect each other enough to have those conversations. I'm always positive – so much so that they take the p'ss – but we've all got our flaws and we're in this same type of world so I think there is some understanding. They say I'm always 'loving it' and I think Tommy is as well but I don't think that he shows it sometimes. He's had 'hits' recently and he just needs that bit more confidence."

In the end motorcycle racing has been the base for friendship. Despite their banter it is clear both riders hold the other in high esteem. There is affection...always underpinned by the humour. "We are all away a lot but when we meet up then we go out and do stuff," says Searle. "Sam is away a bit more and has his place on the Isle of Man. He is doing well now but he doesn't have a care in the world. If someone gave him 10,000 pounds in the morning he'll spend it by the afternoon!"

"I think you can take a lot from your friends... and they can always take a lot from me," Lowes offers. "When we are back we go out for food all the time – none of us can cook obviously – well, Tommy cooked for me a few weeks ago and he didn't even give me a bill for it... although we had to go to the pub for dessert." |



"But first, let me take a selfie..."





DYLAN FERRANDIS COMING TO AMERICA!

IN 2017 DYLAN FERRANDIS WILL LEAVE FRANCE BEHIND AND HEAD FOR THE RED, WHITE AND YAMAHA BLUE OF THE USA...

Words by Eric Johnson

Standing inside the shadowy concrete catacombs of Angel Stadium in Anaheim, Dylan Ferrandis looked just plain stoked. You could see it on his face. With five or six of his friends from back home in France standing beside him, the group paced around and slapped each other on the back while impatiently waiting for the start of the first 450SX main event of the 2016 Monster Energy Supercross Series. Looking more like some local SoCal bro than a European MX2 world championship rider, Ferrandis was wide eyed and thrilled with the immediate reality of his surroundings.

"This is where I want to be in 2017," he declared. "This is where it's at."

Flash forward seven months to the late summer of '16 and despite the fact that Ferrandis' year started off on a rough note – the French racer motored to encouraging 2-2 moto scores at World Championship season opener at the klieg-lit Losail circuit in Qatar before hitting the ground in a heap at round two in Thailand and leaving the brilliantly hot venue in an ambulance – Ferrandis bounced back to re-enter the fray at round six at Latvia.

After taking a few rounds to get back up to full speed it all came right for the Monster Energy Kawasaki MX2 Racing Team at the GP of Trentino in Italy when he snapped Jeffrey Herlings omnipotent win streak by winning the opening moto over the Red Bull KTM racer. By the time the globetrotting MXGP series hit the summer break, Ferrandis has amassed five podium finishes and perhaps more importantly, assumed the role of Jeffrey Herlings' one and only foil.

"I didn't watch the four rounds that I missed due to injury but what I heard was that the MX2 class was less interesting with the easy wins of Jeffrey Herlings!" mused Dylan the week after winning at Trentino. "The track in Italy is always one of the most difficult of the season. I had some rest before the GP and I was feeling better with my shoulder getting stronger week after week."

"In that opening moto I got the holeshot and rode smooth but Jeffrey was behind me and we had a good battle. I just don't give up until the end of the moto. I think that was something that all the MX2 riders had forgotten how to do with Jeffrey. I showed everyone I could fight with him. It felt really good to beat him and of course it was crazy to be able to

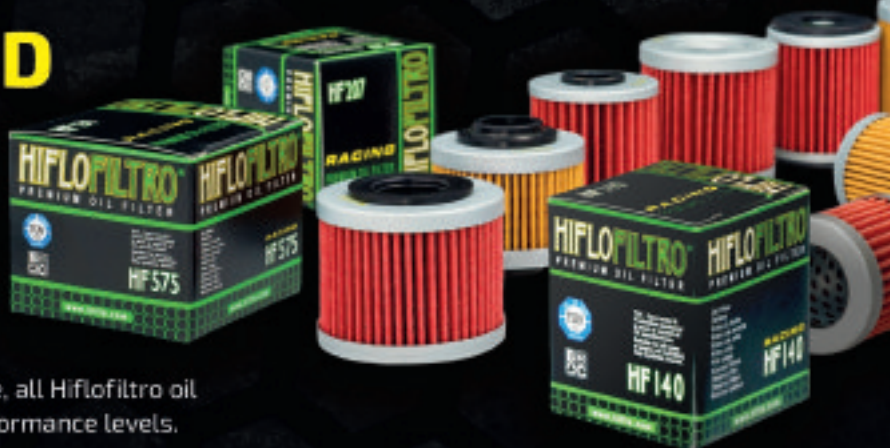
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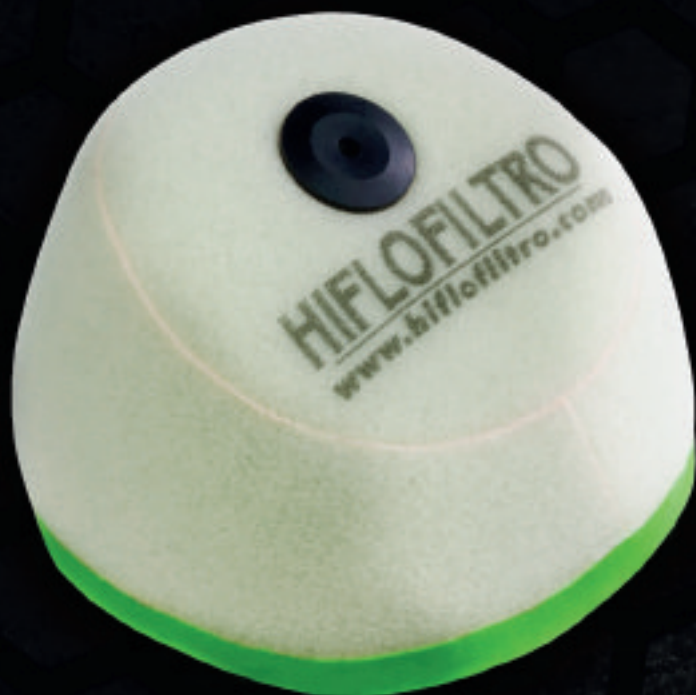


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As well as being a fearsome competitor outdoors Dylan has shown good speed at both Bercy and Lille in the past



Ferrandis fears nobody in MX2



to do so only two months after shoulder surgery."

Renowned as an aggressive rider and one who is not afraid to mix it up on any track and at any time, Ferrandis has not pulled any punches when it comes to speaking his mind about his Dutch rival.

"Jeffrey strong! I think he is the fastest man on a 250cc bike," said Ferrandis. "I don't like him but I have respect for him. The plan is to beat him. I don't know if I'm more aggressive than him. Maybe I am because I am a supercross rider so I need to be. Honestly, I don't think me or Jeffrey are aggressive – it is just that the other riders in MX2 are afraid."

No, Dylan Ferrandis is not afraid. He's not afraid of Herlings, he's not afraid of bashing it out with any rider he comes up against, and he's not afraid of racing in the United States of America. Which, as he alluded to going all the way back to January at Angel Stadium, is where he'll be heading come the end of the '16 MXGP Grand Prix season.

Working in unison with Dylan Ferrandis' business manager in Europe, Jimmy Button – former Team Yamaha factory racer and current Vice President of Action Sports and Olympics at Wasserman – met and started to work with Dylan over the winter months. "Dylan wanted to come over to SoCal during the off-season and to ride for a few weeks," explained Button. "So I picked him up at LAX and set him up in Southern California and from there we formed a relationship."

Aware that Ferrandis fully intended on coming to race in America in 2017, Button, who once raced in the 125cc World Championship, went to work representing Dylan and shopped deals around the industry.

"At the opening Anaheim round last January, I asked him, 'Do you want to do this? Do you >>

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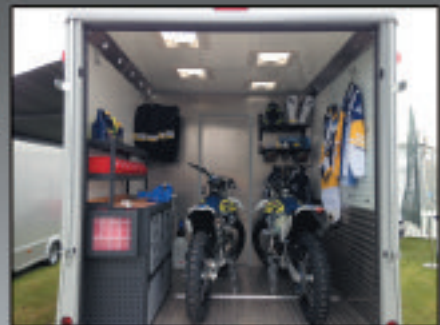
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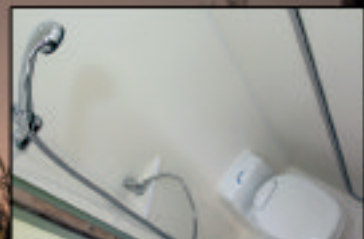
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*'The only limitation is
your imagination'*

A win in Loket was overshadowed by a year ending arm injury that came just days later...



want to race here in America? You can do it.' He said, 'I want to do it but I don't want to ride for Kawasaki'."

Shortly thereafter, the two met up again. "I told Dylan there were two places he wanted to be – GEICO Honda or Star Yamaha. The best offer came from Bobby [Regan] and the Star guys and it was hard to argue that Star didn't have the best bike. Dylan said, 'Yeah, go the Star direction'. It took five or six weeks, but we got the deal done at San Diego II."

It was all kept very quiet and in early May word broke in the U.S. motocross media that Ferrandis had signed a two-year deal to race for Yamalube/Star Racing Yamaha beginning in 2017. Eyes still affixed to the prize in the MXGP World Championship, Ferrandis kept on charging in the MX2 classification.

"My speed is there and the fitness is too but maybe the mental stuff I sometime miss a bit," explained Ferrandis the week before the MXGP of Czech Republic – a race he won with

a commanding two-moto sweep. Yes, Jeffrey Herlings was absent due to a collarbone injury but the result once again proved Ferrandis' ability to win races. "The goal now is to try to fight for the win all the time. And of course if Team France chooses me to do the Motocross of Nations, it would be an honour," he also pointed out – Ferrandis a member of the victorious French team of 2015.

This forthcoming September, Ferrandis will get to line up against the Americans when the MXGP world tour puts stakes in the ground at the Monster Energy MXGP of Americas and the MXGP of USA at Charlotte Motor Speedway and Glen Helen Raceway, respectively. Set to compete upon his KX250F-SR, the Frenchman looks forward to it all. "It's good that we are going to the U.S. It's a World Championship that we do, so it's normal to go where the sport of motocross is really appreciated. I'm really excited to ride Glen Helen but with the Charlotte race I'm a bit disappointed to ride

a track in a stadium when you have amazing tracks in America like Red Bud or Millville."

One retired motocross veteran who will undoubtedly be keeping an eye on the plight of Dylan Ferrandis will be former race winning Grand Prix and supercross competitor David Vuillemin. "I've known him a long time, back to when he was an up-and-comer in 80cc classes," offered Vuillemin who came out of France to enjoy a decade-long racing career in the 1990s. "I think he's different than the other French riders. He's talented and technical but he's more of an aggressive rider and has more of a U.S. style. He's not scared to get into it compared to Marvin Musquin or Christophe Pourcel. They are both nice guys and smooth on the bike where Dylan's more USA and really aggressive and has that U.S. style."

"I think he is decent in supercross and he'll get the hang of it," he furthered. "He'll be on a good bike and on a good team and I think one day he'll be a threat to win a 250 supercross >>





title. Outdoors he is doing really good. He's been the first guy in a few years to beat Herlings straight up. These days you need to be a good outdoor rider to be good in supercross. It's different now than it was in the mid-1990s where a guy like McGrath had such excellent technique. Now all the guys need to ride hard for all 20 laps in supercross. He's going to have to work hard. He has a lot of fun and likes to joke around and I think he'll have to get away from that maybe. He's aggressive and he's not scared of contact. He has the potential to do well here."

Jimmy Button, also once a world class racer, also sees plenty of potential in his young client. "His edginess and cockiness drive him. That's the fire in him. I mean he and Cooper [Webb] get along really well and Cooper spoke highly of him to Yamaha. I really think he has a shot coming in and I know he'll do the work. He understands he needs to do the work to get where he wants to be.

"He can come over after the last GP and get into supercross and ride it the whole off-season. Come January, if he's healthy and depending on which coast he rides, I think he's

going to be a threat at the beginning. If he can get a few good results right away and get his confidence and starts to think, 'I'm supposed to be here. I can win', I can see him contending and maybe winning a few races. And as far as the outdoors, he'll be in the mix at the first gate drop in Sacramento."

Come the conclusion of the Motocross of Nations in Italy in late September, Dylan Ferrandis will turn his full attention to California and the Yamalube/Star Racing Yamaha outfit he will go to work for.

"The team looks cool and strong and won the



Dylan is the only rider to beat Herlings in MX2 so far this season

motocross and supercross championship so it's the most important team," said Ferrandis. "I don't know the riders. I've only meet Cooper Webb at the Lille Bercy race last year and Cooper and his mechanic were super-cool. I really look forward to racing in the U.S. – for me, outdoor motocross is the fuel of motocross but supercross is the most fun thing ever invented for a dirt bike. When I was young we would build a small supercross track at my home and ever since I have practiced with the whoops, the triple jump and the step-up and step-down jumps. I can't live without doing all that!"

In a never ending quest to find championship-calibre motocross talent all over the world, the elite teams of the sport are ceaselessly looking for lightning to strike. Dylan Ferrandis went looking for Star Yamaha and an opportunity in America and in Ferrandis the factory Yamaha 250cc satellite team hopes they have found a rider who can win them AMA titles. Whatever will be, will be and Dylan Ferrandis is full-on ready, willing and able to make a run at his dream.

"I don't plan to leave my home country, my family and my friends for nothing – that's for

sure. The plan will be to try and fight for every race win. I know the first year is not going to be easy because everything will be so different but it's a nice and big challenge. It has been a dream since I was young and watching racing videos of the American championship. It was what Tortelli and Vuillemin and Pichon did and that was what I wanted to do. I don't really know why. Maybe it's because the sport of motocross in the USA is really famous and appreciated compared to Europe. Now it's more an accomplishment than a dream."

by Herbie Jones



King

of the Castle!

WITH THE VMXDN SET TO ROCK FARLEIGH CASTLE ON SEPTEMBER 3/4 WE CATCH UP WITH EVENT CREATOR AND CURATOR DAVE KING TO GET THE LOWDOWN ON THIS RAREST OF RACE EVENTS...

Words by Max Hind Photos by Haggis Hartman

Over the past seven years the Vets Motocross des Nations has grown at an exponential rate. This once humble race – which was conceptualised on the back of a fag packet – has evolved to become one of the globe's most popular dirt bike events transforming a field near the small village of Farleigh Hungerford into a Mecca for motocross fans.

But how did it all begin? How did this event on our doorstep that has created – or perhaps re-created – some of the best and most iconic moments in motocross memory come about? How did we get JMB back on a dirt bike? And why do we have an array of AMA legends descend upon this event every year?

Well to know the answer to those questions you really need to know the man that started it all. You need to know his love for the sport, you need to know his attention to detail and most importantly of all you need to know about the 1989 world championship winning Dave Thorpe Factory Honda that kick-started this whole adventure.

We had a chat with the King of the Castle to get the lowdown on the event, how it started and where it might be heading in the future. As we talked with Dave his enthusiasm and passion for the event and for the sport in general was just seeping through the phone. It was clear to us just why this was the guy to make this event happen and happen oh-so successfully....

DBR: Tell us about your love for motocross. How, when and why did it all start for you?

DK: "It must have been about 1973 or '74, I was in school and schoolboy scrambling was in its infancy. There were two guys in my class called Russell Priddle and Neil Hanham who had bikes – both of those guys went on to have semi-pro careers and raced alongside Dave Thorpe. I used to come into school on a Monday morning and >>





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I heard all about their adventures doing schoolboy scrambles on the weekend. As well as that I lived within five miles of Matchams Park which was obviously popular back then. So my dad used to take me to watch some meetings and it all really started from there."

DBR: So you caught the bug from your school friends...

DK: "Absolutely! I desperately wanted to do schoolboy scrambling but my mum and dad never had the money for it. So riding was just totally out of the question when I was a kid. It wasn't until I finished school, starting working and making my own money that I could finally get started in the world of motocross."

DBR: So once you finally left school and were able to afford your own bike, what did you get your hands on? Was it an exotic factory piece?

DK: "My first ever motocross bike was a second-hand 1979 YZ 400 two-stroke – it was absolutely knackered. But for me, it was my pride and joy. It made me a superstar. I finally had a proper motocross bike. Before that I think I had some sort of step-through that I tried to make look like a motocross bike. I went from that to the YZ which was a proper full on motocross bike and just loved it."

DBR: Fast forward to the present day and you're still pretty much infatuated with bikes like that '79 YZ 400. What is it about the vets and vintage racing that has captured not only your imagination but the imagination of the thousands of people that attend the VMXdN?

DK: "I don't think I could honestly answer why it has become so popular with so many people. I guess it's all just very real and it's all done from the heart. These are the kind of meetings that I would love to go to as a punter. I'd willingly hand over my £20 to go and watch this stuff – it'd give me absolutely everything I wanted. I suppose that's the answer really, people are getting exactly what they want."

"And for me, I'm like a kid in a sweet shop with it. I'm getting to chat with, meet and befriend some of my motocross gods and

idols. There are not many people in the world that can say that their passion has turned into, well not a job but something pretty close to it, a way of life I guess. I get to talk to these legendary racers not just as riders but as just real, nice people and friends."

DBR: So we know about your journey from fan to rider. Now tell us how you went from rider to super fan to race promoter...

DK: "Crikey! As I rider I was never really any good, I was and still am just a total clubman rider. But I have a passion for exotic bikes and that came from going to the GPs at Farleigh Castle in the '80s."

"At that time I never went to anywhere else other than Farleigh, simply because I had no money to go elsewhere. I was married, had a mortgage and a young kid to bring up – it just wasn't feasible to go to other GPs. Farleigh was close and easy to get to so I always made an effort to go there. But when I did go to the GPs I was that guy hanging over the fence – not at track – but in the pits to get a closer look at these exotic factory bikes. Don't get me wrong I was interested in the racing as well but I was far more interested in those special bikes. Back in those days the factory machines were absolutely nothing like what you could buy – they were super exotic. They were the special things for me."

"That's what I think is wrong with motocross today. Today you go to a GP paddock and okay some of them have special bits that you can't buy but most of >>



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Photo: Davide Messora

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Dave's not afraid to get behind the bars but prefers letting star riders use his more special machinery



them you could recreate if you had the money. But back in the '80s that was impossible – it just didn't happen.

"Going from an admirer/collector of these bikes to becoming a race promoter was a bit of a fluke really. Farleigh Castle back in 2008 – pre VMXdN – was pretty much a forgotten about venue. Phil Steadman used to do the King of the Castle there but that was a very low key event. At that time I'd been racing twinshocks for 20 years, the guys that ran the national series at the time had done meetings at Hawkstone and done meetings elsewhere but they had never – in my opinion – been done right. They had never paid attention to detail – they had never been brave and had never put their hands in their pockets to get the proper people to the meetings.

"The first year we did Farleigh was 2009 – the same year I bought Dave Thorpe's 1989 Factory Honda. I wanted to get Dave back at Farleigh to do a lap on that bike, in the proper time appropriate kit, with the right helmet and stuff. I wanted to pay attention to all the little details. And that was the start of it all. After that people knew what they were going to get and knew that they'd get what they wanted to see."

DBR: So that DT Honda was a big part of launching the VMXdN into existence. I think it's fair to say that bike has become almost a symbol/mascot for the event. Would you agree?

DK: "That bike has raced at Farleigh a good few times to be fair but you won't be seeing it there again – I've sold it and it will be going to the States. I guess it has become a symbol, Farleigh is where that bike was raced in '89 and that's the last time we had a 500cc world champion."

DBR: So how exactly did you get your hands on the bike that started it all?

DK: "It was just totally random really. I was at work some time in the winter of 2008 when Dave Thorpe called me out of the blue. It was a time when bike thefts were really becoming prevalent and people knew about them. It was around the time that MXTrax was popular and they had a stolen bike thread on the site. Every day you'd hear about bikes here, there and everywhere going missing. Dave was concerned that his bikes were going to get stolen so he rang me and said he wanted to sell them and he wanted me to help him find a home for them. And we did just that, the '86 stayed in this country, the '85 went to South Africa and I bought the '89. It was as simple as that."

DBR: So obviously at some point you went from leaning over fences to get a closer look at these bikes to actually owning a good few yourself. How did the collection begin?

DK: "The works bike thing started back in 2004. I was at the GP in Spain and Kurt Nicoll was the team manager at the time. I flippantly asked Kurt if he had any bikes and he said he had several still at home. So I asked if he'd sell one, he said 'yeah, sure I'll sell you one'. He gave me his brother's phone number and said he'll sort it all out for me. I flew home on the Monday, drove up there on the Tuesday and came home with his 1988 works 500cc Kawasaki. That's how all of this started really, that got the ball rolling."

DBR: So how many bikes do you think you've had over the years?

DK: "Crikey! I've probably had about 20 special ones. At the moment I've got another works Kawasaki – a perimeter framed one that's from 1992/'93 – and I've got a YZ 360 Yamaha that Doug Dubach will be riding at Farleigh this year. I've got an Everts' 1996 250 Honda that needs putting back together. I've got all sorts of random stuff!"

DBR: So what do you do with these bikes? Do you just keep them in a glass box and stare at them? Do they come out once a year? What's the situation with them?

DK: "Generally they just come out once a year. >>





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I rotate them and bring them out and someone will ride them at Farleigh."

DBR: Do you ever ride them yourself?

DK: "Never! I do still ride, but that's just the twinshock stuff really. But I don't ride the special bikes, I'm not worthy!"

DBR: So does it give you the same sort of satisfaction seeing the likes of Doug Dubach riding these bikes and watching Dave being reunited with his factory steed?

DK: "Absolutely! We're recreating a bit of history – it's fantastic! Yes, these bikes should be preserved but they should also be seen running, they should be ridden. It'd be cruel to cage these animals. That's one of the great things about Farleigh – you see so many drop dead gorgeous bikes and nine times out of 10 they are out there on-track being raced."

DBR: Since that first year in 2009 the VMXdN has grown at an incredible rate. It's become one of the biggest motocross events in the country, if not the world. How the hell do you think that has that happened?

DK: "Wow! How did it happen? Well it started – quite literally- on the back of a fag packet. It was just a random spontaneous idea. That first year I went round and banged in every post myself. It was a lot of hard work and a lot of dedication but I think the world was ready for that meeting to be created. The timing was perfect. We had the benefit of free advertising on sites like MXTrax and I used to bombard those every single day. That was a great advertising tool. I suppose after you put on the first one you gain a bit of confidence, a bit of knowhow, you get feedback, people say how good it was, how much they enjoyed it and it just grows naturally."


"In 2011 we had a real American team come for the first time. That was the turning point for the event. Since we had that US team all of a sudden people acknowledged it as a proper event. It's the same with the modern day MXoN – if the Americans don't show up it's just another GP really."

"After the American team came for the first time we had some coverage in Racer X and that made it a lot easier for me to go after those superstar American riders and get them to come ride. All of a sudden it was a different ball game, I wasn't just some random English guy phoning up – they'd read about the event, they'd seen it, heard about it and talked to people that had been and they knew it was a legitimate, worthwhile and fun event to come to. I'd definitely say that the event in 2011 was a crucial turning point for us."

DBR: When you actually attend the VMXdN you can't help but notice the vibe about the place. The event just feels special. Is that something that you have consciously tried to maintain over the years?

DK: "Absolutely. I don't want it to be like anything else. We want it to feel unique and special. I dedicate 365 days a year to those few days in September and I think that shows. There's other people that do lots of other meetings throughout the year and do other vintage stuff but those guys are busy doing lots of stuff and their focus is all over the place. You have to be totally focused and totally dedicated to that one event, that one weekend in order to make it right. Just to get those big named riders there is hard enough but then we've got to put the package together once they're here. We've got to source them a bike, get them on a bike, we've got to make sure they're looked after and that the bikes are running well all weekend. I'll tell you it isn't easy. It's a lot of hard work."

"That first year really opened our eyes as >>



to how difficult it is. I just thought I'd find people to lend bikes and it'll be fine. But obviously not everybody prepares bikes to the same standard as somebody else. That first year we had bike issues all weekend. From that point I kind of vowed to get the right people involved. And those right people have been Rob Walters and the Denton family. They have been absolutely fantastic and without them the American side of the event wouldn't be what it is today."

DBR: Over the past seven years you've had some of the biggest names in the history of motocross spin laps around Farleigh Castle...

DK: "We've arguably had the biggest! You tell me, who would've thought JMB would ever get on a bike again? Nobody! And it'll probably never happen again. But we managed to get him back on a 500 Honda with his old mechanic. It's all about attention to detail."

DBR: So you must have some cool stories of how you've managed to chase down these stars and convince them to race at you'rent ...

DK: "The European guys are usually more difficult. When I used to walk around the GP paddock in the early days – like 2010 – ex riders would see me and run the other way. They knew exactly what I was going to ask them. I was absolutely unrelenting – I'd just bombard them! Whereas with the Americans they are so far away it's usually just done over the telephone. I don't like emails and I will never go through a third party. I will always pick up the phone and make the effort to contact them directly. That way I can hear and tell whether they are genuinely interested or not."

"Back when we first started this, Facebook wasn't like it is today. It was hard work finding people and finding their contact details. Nowadays it's a piece of p*ss to go on Facebook and find them right away! Before Facebook this stuff was proper detective work. I managed to track those guys down and bring them to the event."

"I've also been on trips to the States with the sole intention of finding guys to come and race the VMXdN. I went to the Vegas SX in May 2011 with the mission of finding one big name American rider. In the end we found four!"

"If I'm being honest I never truly believed that Jeff Stanton would actually show up to race in 2011. I met Jeff at the Vegas SX when he was working with Kevin Windham. I saw him and pounced. I said hey Jeff I know you like your vintage bikes, would you come to this event? He said he was onboard and gave me

his number. I was thinking that was just a big palm off. I kept in contact and gave him a couple of text messages."

"The week before the race we'd been in contact and he said he was still coming but he never mentioned anything about flights or the sort. It was the Friday before the event, I was walking around the paddock and I found out that Jeff and his son were trying to find me. I just said to him I can't believe you're actually here! It just seemed crazy! I learnt a lot from Jeff on how to approach those American guys."

"I went back out to America in February 2015. I had a meeting planned with Damon Bradshaw at Anaheim but he never showed up! We flew all the way over there, talked to him the day before and he said it was still on. But when I got there he wouldn't answer his phone. So that's one time that it went completely wrong!"

"Although after that meeting fell through we went to see David Bailey. Last year we had the chance to bring David over but it was a bit late to organise everything. Being able to meet him was great and he'll be here in a future year."

DBR: Who else is on your hit list? Who else would you love to come and who do you think would be game to race?

DK: "The number one guy would be Hakan Carlqvist – the king of Farleigh. Other big names we'd love would be guys like Jeremy McGrath and Damon Bradshaw. It'd be lovely to have Stefan Everts over one year but in some ways it's easier to get the Americans rather than the Europeans."

"Stefan was going to come in 2012 but he broke his wrist just beforehand. The problem we have now is the busy Grand Prix season. A lot of guys like Stefan still work on that Grand Prix circuit so even if we didn't clash with a GP would guys like that really want to spend a rare weekend off racing dirt bikes? Perhaps not."

"So that's the problem we have with the current era of legends that are working at the GPs and it'd be too much of a risk to push the event back any later in the year because traditionally we've had good weather. Over the last 10 years I'd say September has become the new August so hopefully we'll be good this year too!"

DBR: You mentioned earlier that the Dave Thorpe '89 Honda is moving on to a new owner. Does this feel like an end to a pretty big journey for yourself and that machine?

DK: "Yes it does really. I've owned that bike since 2008, I'm proud to say I've owned it and that I got it back running, I've done what I wanted to do with it and I think its time to

move it onto someone else that is going to enjoy it as much as I did. Don't get me wrong I'm going to be gutted when it's gone but everything comes to an end at some point."

DBR: So do you have your eye on any other machines to take its place?

DK: "No not really. I've got a lifetime worth of projects in my garage at the moment so I really don't need any more bikes! To be honest there's not really a lot out there that excites me – I've had the best of the best."

DBR: So keeping on the subject of the future. Where do you see the VMXdN progressing in the next five to 10 years?

DK: "Size wise it's where it's at. It won't get any bigger due to the restraints of the venue and the amount of riders we can have on the track. So in that aspect the event is already maxed out. I think it's just progressing the attention to detail and just trying to keep it a really, really special event. I think all we can do is to try and bring in new things and new aspects all the time, just crazy things. Like two years ago we brought in a brass band to play before the legends laps, utter bullshit that doesn't really mean anything but it was very different from what you would ever see at a motocross event. We've had helicopters drop in riders, all sorts – it's just about thinking outside of the box, creating a bit of theatre around it and making it different."

DBR: So do you have any cool plans for this year?

DK: "Well, that's top secret!"

DBR: So we are just thinking out loud here. Could we ever see the VMXdN visit any other tracks in the future? Maybe Namur? That would be seriously cool...

DK: "I've already tried. I had a meeting with Namur town council 18 months ago. It's done, there's not a chance! We almost had to bribe them just to meet with us. I went over there in November 2014 and spent a day with the town council wining and dining them and to be frank it's completely done there. Unless there's a major shift in local government and politics it's done and it's finished."

DBR: If it did happen that could possibly be a way to get Carlqvist on board?

DK: "Possibly! But I think Hakan is over it too – he's done a pretty fine job of disappearing. In this day in age with the internet and everything it's a pretty impressive thing for someone as famous as Carlqvist was to disappear off the map. You've got to be really trying to stay out

of the public eye.

"But yes if we could make it happen at Namur it would blow Farleigh out of the water. Namur is the real Mecca of motocross. But sadly that's not going to happen or at least not anytime soon."

DBR: For you personally what is the greatest VMXdN moment in history? Either on the track or off the track...

DK: "Crikey! It could possibly be getting that French team together in 2013. Recreating that French team and getting Bayle there was very cool. To be honest this year having Kurt Nicoll race might top everything for me. Kurt seems to be very up for it and I just can't seem to get my head around why he is so keen for it this year, I mean I've tried to get Kurt to ride for the past five years and he just hasn't been interested. Then all of a sudden this year he goes from zero to 1,000mph being flat out up for it. That'll certainly be interesting this year."

"It's hard to pinpoint just one moment because we've had so many great moments and great people come along, I don't think I have just one singular thing."

"What was your favourite moment?"

DBR: The race in 2012 when Ryno Hughes came over. In the 500 race he was leading, crashed, went to the back of the pack and came back through to pass Werner Dewit for the win on the very last corner. That was pretty epic...

"Who's the legend that you're most proud of bringing over to race the VMXdN?"

DK: "I think it has to be Bayle. When JMB finished motocross, he finished motocross. He was gone, he was done and he never came back to it...until 2013 and the VMXdN. I think he will tell you that the only reason he is where he is today with that job at Honda is because of that race in 2013. The whole deal kicked off at Farleigh, Roger Harvey was there, they got together and the rest is history. I never actually got to see JMB ride back in the day so it was very cool for me to see him at Farleigh, he was such an elusive character as well so it has to be Bayle for sure."

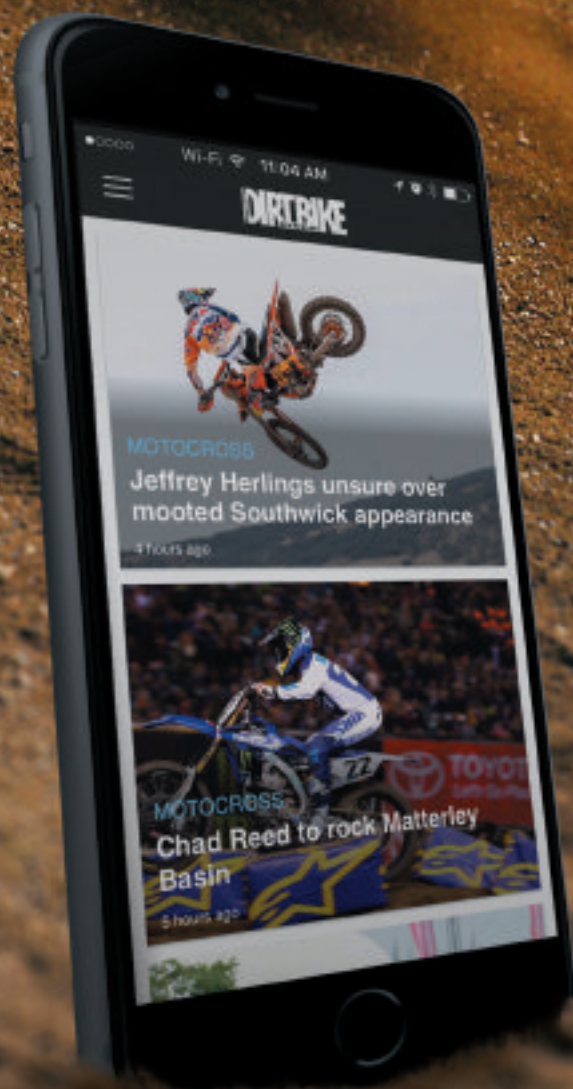
DBR: Obviously the VMXdN isn't just a one man job anymore there must be loads of people that help you out...

DK: "I just want to say thanks first of all to all the people for supporting the VMXdN over the years. Without the punters coming along there would be no event, it would be pointless putting it on. So thanks to everyone for supporting it and thanks to all the other guys that make this event happen - Brian Higgins and the West Devon Motorcycle Club are a huge part of it, the ACU are a huge part of it too. There are just too many people to thank individually but thanks to them all!"



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WHEN HIS TOP-FLIGHT TRIALS CAREER CAME TO AN END GRAHAM JARVIS PRETTY MUCH STUMBLED INTO THE WORLD OF EXTREME ENDUROS WHERE HE'S FORGED A REPUTATION AS BEING ONE OF THE BEST IN THE BUSINESS...

Words by **Sean Lawless** Photos by **Nuno Laranjeira**

If there was ever a competition to find the world's best off-road all-rounder then Graham Jarvis would be right at the front of the queue.

The 41-year-old former world-class trials rider is now an extreme enduro superstar with a long list of wins in the sport's major events and – thanks to a string of viral videos showcasing his amazing riding skills – nearly 1,000,000 Facebook followers.

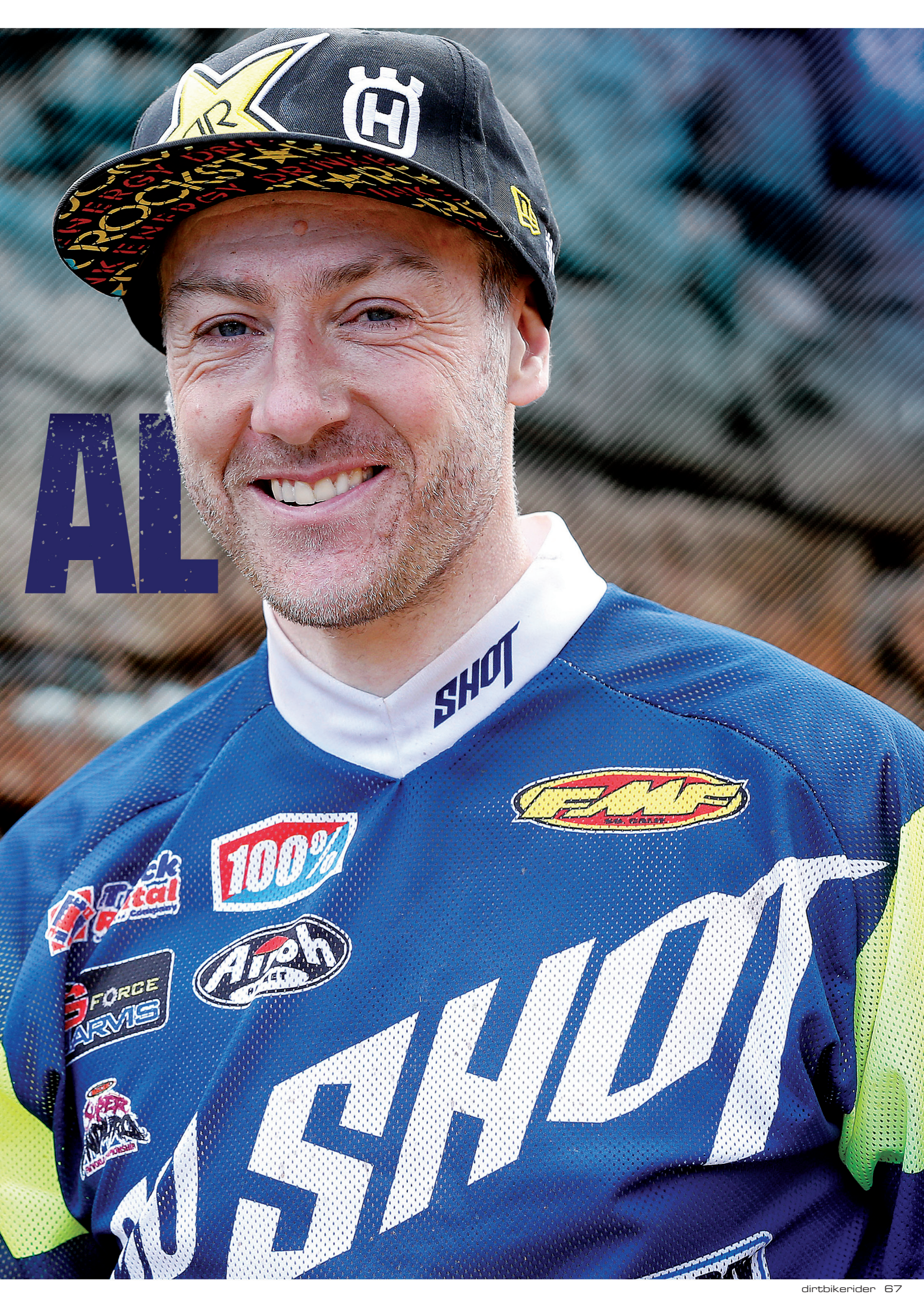
One of the biggest names in a scene controlled by big-name energy drinks complete with all the adrenalin-junkie hype that accompanies them, Graham's legion of online fans could be forgiven for thinking he's some sort of hardcore extreme athlete who lives his life to a pumping rock and roll soundtrack.

The truth is very different...

Softly-spoken and self-effacing, Graham is straight out of the old-school. Originally from Canterbury, he's always been someone who prefers to let his riding do the talking but the years he's spent living in Yorkshire have undoubtedly helped shape his down-to-earth demeanour.

"Nobody could ever have planned or predicted where riding motorcycles has taken me," he tells me down the phone from his home in Ripon. "It's all a bit random isn't it. You just focus on things race by race and then all of a sudden you look where you are, where you've arrived at..."

I first interviewed Graham back in the early '90s when he was a ridiculously talented >>



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teenage trials star. I was warned it would be a tough task to get him to talk but a few minutes into the interview he began to open up. This time around it was much the same and after a few awkward lulls in the conversation he found his flow.

What's most impressive about Graham isn't, for me, his amazing skills on two-wheels – although his jaw-dropping talents are incredible. Looking at the bigger picture, it's the longevity of his career and the way he's managed to reinvent himself that makes him so exceptional.

Take the Lampkin family out of the equation and he's arguably Britain's most successful trials rider. A five-time British champion, four-time Scottish Six Days Trial winner, winner of five world trials championship rounds and a three-time world trials #4, Graham's pedigree in the sport is undisputed.

He also holds the record for Scott Trial wins. The Richmond club's famous time and observation event is regarded as the toughest one-day trial in the world and, with hindsight, his nine victories – the last coming in 2009 – were an indication of how suited his skillset was to extreme enduros.

But when the fun began to go out of the sport

for him, he switched codes and emerged as one of the main players in the evolving world of extreme and hard enduros.

"I dropped back in the world [trials] championship and was always around seventh or eighth and I was quite a way off getting on the podium and then I sort of lost a bit of interest in it I suppose. I'd done what I could so I just did enduros for a bit of fun really."

Graham makes it sound as though his feet-up career was on the ropes when he finally made the switch but he went out on a high in 2007 before calling it quits as a full-time rider.

"The British championship went down to the last round and I won it and I just thought 'I've had enough'. I'd been riding trials for such a long time. Sherco were still helping me out and it fitted in quite well. At the time there were only a couple of big hard enduro events which didn't get nothing like the coverage there is now.

"I wasn't really looking at it as a career option – it was just a bit of fun on the side. I dread to think what I'd be doing now if the sport hadn't taken off like it has. I didn't really have a career lined up outside of motorcycles and I think it's difficult to think about things like that when you need to be focused on what you're doing. But

there's always something to do..."

With limited support Graham quietly went about his business and was rewarded with immediate success.

"I won Romaniacs in 2008 but I was still just a privateer really with nobody helping me at all. I just went to the events – Erzberg, Romaniacs, Hell's Gate – on my own in 2008 although I was still getting a bit of factory support from Sherco to do the enduros because, obviously, they were trying to build it up."

Graham's success in extreme enduros has mirrored the sport's growth. In the early days extreme events were pretty much seen as a curio but now, thanks mainly to investment by Red Bull and the Austrian company's extraordinary promotional abilities, it's become big business with a higher profile than conventional enduros. The Enduro World Championship even introduced extreme tests in a bid to harness its popularity.

"I don't really know when it took off – it's sort of been a gradual build-up in hard enduros. Probably in the last five years it's been good publicity but before that there was not a lot.

"There's not a lot of money in what we do but the way I see it you have to do it while you can >>



Graeme first made a name for himself in the WTC



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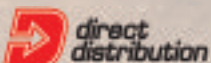
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and enjoy it while you can. I'm making a living from it and the factories are starting to realise the publicity it gets. It gets more than world enduros now. You can see that by the number of followers on social media.

"Social media's a massive thing. I'd say probably more people know who I am through videos than from me winning anything. That's where I've got the most followers from. It's a cool way of spreading the word of hard enduros and building the sport up.

"I wish that it had all taken off earlier because I maybe wasted the last few years doing trials. In a way I wish I could have stopped trials earlier and gone into giving it a go in normal enduros. I do local normal enduros now and I did a couple of world championship events and British stuff when I first started for the experience and to have a bit of fun."

Enjoying what he's doing is a major motivation for Graham which is the reason he's turned his back on indoor and stadium events.

"When I first started I did the indoor series and I was getting in the top five. I did the X-Games in Los Angeles and Munich and I think I was fourth or fifth so I could do okay but then the level moved up and it got a bit too much for a man of my age. It's very intense and the tracks started getting faster and the riders were getting faster as well and I don't enjoy them either – too much waiting around. I prefer to get out and ride."

As his extreme career took off and the sport gained more coverage Graham began to pick up extra support, enabling him to progress from not a lot more than a man in a van to a factory rider with the Rockstar Husqvarna team.

"I was on my own going to races and then the Goldentyre guys in Italy helped out through the Sherco factory. Then they got me the ride with Husaberg so I was with the Italian guys in a private team as such and spent a good three years with them. That was really good for me because, obviously, the tyres were really good as well and they were a professional team, had their own sponsors – it was proper professional help.

"They were really good guys and it was a big jump forwards for me. It worked. Then I went with the factory but I'm grateful to those guys because it was the turning point for me. I was getting the results with them and before they brought the professional side to it I was struggling a bit.

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day stuff when you're prepping your bike – I don't need to worry about anything like that. I don't have to drive to Erzberg. It's hard enough as it is riding so it's good that I can just fly there and know that everything's going to be prepped well.

"It's difficult doing it on your own but in a way I'm glad I did have those years because it makes you appreciate what you have got."

Graham's worked with his current mechanic Damien Butler for three years and as well as an effective professional relationship the pair have forged a strong friendship.

"We go out practising together and it's good to have a friend there as well. An English mechanic who's also your mate – it's not just about the spanners, it's about having someone you can rely on as well and talk to."

If you look at some of the biggest names in the sport – Taddy Blazusiak, David Knight, Andreas Lettenbichler, Alfredo Gomez, Graham and Jonny Walker – they all have a trials background in common. That's not to say that

riders from other disciplines can't adapt to the sport but it seems to be easier for trials riders to pick up speed than for, say, motocrossers to learn the technical skills needed to succeed.

"The hard enduros are fast riding so you need to keep a good pace up and it's not for everybody, not everyone can make the change over. Obviously, that flat-out motocross style is never going to be my style but I'm okay with fast riding through the trees.

"You need it all really and I'm constantly relying on the skills I learned riding trials. I was brought up in the mud and that's probably still helping me now. It depends on the race too – some are faster than others."

The sport's rise in popularity has seen an influx of new riders with Walker in particular stepping up but, far from resenting the extra home-grown competition, Graham sees the young Cumbrian's rise to fame as a positive.

"I won Erzberg in '13, King of the Hill and Romaniacs but I haven't won a lot in the last two years with Jonny [Walker] coming along.

I get on really good with Jonny and we travel together a lot. It's good – we have a right laugh.

"He's a rival but, whatever happens, after a race whoever wins buys the beers. As sports get more professional you see less of it but I think for me I want to go there and enjoy it as well. It's a slog anyway being away from home and I'd rather go there and enjoy myself and lose than have a shit time and win.

"I suppose as you get older you look at it differently – I'm happy just to be making a living from riding, I haven't had to go and get a proper job yet."

The 2016 season is proving to be a vintage one for Graham with, among his victories, wins at The Tough One, Erzberg and, most recently, a record-breaking fifth Romaniacs title – very different events which perfectly illustrate how versatile a top extreme rider needs to be.

"Romaniacs is a different race to anything else. Four long days – the first day this year was eight hours – but the first thing is to just get to the finish. It's a case of weighing up where >>



you've got to play safe and where you can go flat-out.

"A lot of it is through long grass with lots of little drops so it's a case of taking it easy where you have to but then on the other hand you've got to take risks to win. Wade Young was just flat-out through the grass and he won a couple of days – at the end of the day you won't win without taking risks."

Compare that to this year's Erzberg Rodeo which Graham rates as possibly his biggest ever win.

"Erzberg and Romaniacs are completely different races. Erzberg is over in two-and-a-bit hours and it's a mass start. Romaniacs you start off on your own and the actual riding time is something like 27 hours.

"At Erzberg one mistake early on and you're going to be struggling. My trials skills come into play but there are other factors. You've got to qualify good which means flat-out up the

Prologue but I'm always relying on my trials skills. In Romaniacs there's a lot of fast going – probably 50 per cent – and other guys are as fast if not faster on some bits but you need everything, all the skills, over the four days."

Graham's just signed to race for another two years – "if the body holds up for that long it will be good" – with Rockstar Husqvarna with the 300cc two-stroke his preferred weapon of choice.

"I've dabbled with a four-stroke a bit and I like them. I won Roof of Africa on a four-stroke and, obviously, in the early days I was on the Sherco four-stroke – a 450 to start with and then did Erzberg and came second on, I think, a four-stroke 250. On the faster stuff there's not much difference but as soon as you get into the gnarly stuff the two-stroke's a bit lighter with lots of power."

The extreme enduro calendar is getting increasingly crowded and Graham's services

are in demand.

"I've got the Tennessee knock-out in a couple of weeks – I've never done that one before. The American guys are loving it – Cody Webb's there – so it should be a good race. Jonny did it last year and got beat. Then it's mainly the Red Bull ones – the Megawatt, Sea to Sky if we do it."

Finally, I want to know, with so many of his rivals over the years benefitting from lucrative support from Red Bull does he feel like he's been overlooked by the sport's biggest hitter despite being a world-class rider for almost two decades?

His reply is typically Graham – self-effacing, pragmatic and shot through with his deadpan sense of humour...

"Five or six years ago we approached Red Bull and KTM and they said I was too old but perhaps I wasn't cool enough, I don't know. But it's worked out good with Rockstar..."



NEMESIS! DOUGIE LAMPKIN



Despite having the upper hand when the pair rode youth trials, Graham's adult career was overshadowed by 12-time world champion Dougie Lampkin.

"I'm a year older than Dougie so I was beating him when we were riding youth trials. I suppose that extra year made a difference."

With Graham's mentor Malcolm Rathmell and Dougie's dad Martin such close friends and old rivals, surely it must have been hard for him to always play second fiddle to not just another British rider but one who was living pretty much down the road?

"It wasn't tough for me. I think it probably helped me in a way to be around Dougie and Mart and it was good for Malcolm to have his mate Martin with him. So I can't say it was a tough thing – I wish I could have done better but it wasn't hard. He was an exceptional rider and I was more worried about what I was

doing really, just trying to keep a career going."

How about when Dougie started riding hard enduros?

"When Dougie started I saw him as just someone else I had to beat. I think any competition's good. There are new riders coming in now and it's all getting close with everyone pushing each other but you can't expect to do a sport and not have people pushing you otherwise it would be boring. Competition makes you try harder, it motivates you. The bigger and better the competition the more satisfying it is to win."

"But there was a little bit of 'here we go again' as I was the one who moved to enduros first and then he followed me. I can't deny it, I was a little bit, er, not angry but you know whatever he does he's going to be putting 100 per cent in and he's tough to beat and can make your life hard."



BURNICLE'S BEAT

PART TWO

DASHING DUTCHMEN!

Jack Burnicle offers up a rundown of pretty much every flying Dutchman from 1987 to the modern day...

Words and photos by Jack Burnicle



Tragter flies the number one plate at Foxhill in the 1994 British 125GP



Kees van der Ven surges to second in a 1987 Namur downpour

1987 saw Holland's first world motocross champion Dave Stribos and his Italian Cagiva go head to head with his school friend and Yamaha factory pilot John van den Berk for 125 grand prix supremacy. Van den Berk had scored grand prix successes in 1986, winning in Spain, Sweden and Finland to finish 125 runner-up to Stribos but Davey cleaned up the first two rounds of 1987, completing Dutch and Belgian hat-tricks at Valkenswaard and Nismes. He also won in Bulgaria, France and Switzerland.

'Berkie' responded with victories at Killinchy in Northern Ireland and the Finnish GP where Stribos's double DNF proved crucial, enabling John van den Berk to claim Yamaha's first 125 title. Suddenly the Netherlands boasted two world champions!

And while 250GP star Gert-Jan van Doorn was sidelined with a badly broken wrist Kees van der Ven and his works KTM won the last two 500GPs in Luxembourg and a decisive double at Roggenburg, Switzerland and almost snatched second place in the table from Kurt Nicoll (Kawasaki).

Kees then led the Netherlands to another superb second place in the first MX des Nations to be held in America, almost beating the Yanks in a quagmire at Unadilla with support from Stribos (125) and 250 debutante van den Berk. Kees whupped Jeff Ward and but for Stribos – after epic duels with Jean-Michel Bayle and Bob Hannah – snapping the clutch lever on his Cagiva, Holland who were joint leaders with Belgium after race one might well have won.

Van der Ven went on to finish fourth overall in the 1988 500 world championship with a staggering sixth successive podium at Hawkstone Park and another at his home round in Lichtenvoorde. This cool classy customer never finished outside the top five in a decade of world championships contesting all three classes and, the first man victorious in every class, won 18 grands prix all told. Slipping to eighth in 1989 then seventh in 1990, when he mounted the rostrum at Namur, Kees left KTM and saw out his racing

career on a private Honda. He would return with resounding success running his Champ KTM 125GP squad in the late nineties, mentoring South African Grant Langston to the world title in 2000.

John van den Berk, a dashing, dark-haired fitness fanatic with darting brown eyes, a pushy dad and his own 'JB' brand of racewear moved into 250GPs for Yamaha in 1988. Second behind Jeremy Whatley (Suzuki) at the opening round in France, he embarked on a battle with the enigmatic Englishman, winning his first moto at Mongay in Spain.

Van den Berk was one of the early European exponents of supercross, a star of Paris Bercy, and dominated the third round at the supercross-styled Arsago Seprio in Italy. John edged the verdict from Jeremy in a storm-lashed British Grand Prix at Frome and finished second to another Brit, his Yamaha team-mate Rob Herring in Belgium. But Flying Finn Pekka Vehkonen (Cagiva) blew everybody away in Germany and Yugoslavia and when Whatley broke his leg in a practice fall Vehkonen emerged as van den Berk's main challenger, winning again in Venezuela. Both were beaten in Sweden's final round by a rampant Gert-Jan van Doorn, Vehkonen's new Cagiva team-mate, who finished a strong fourth in the table. But van den Berk, second overall on a tie-breaker with Pekka, clinched the 250 championship in his rookie season.

Stribos meanwhile fought to regain his 125GP crown in a sensational season-long duel with Jean-Michel Bayle's Honda. Davey's Cagiva had won seven grands prix against Bayle's four and led the series by seven points when they arrived for the final round in Switzerland. Hard by the French border, Geneva was swamped by fanatical French fans and, with Stribos hindered by dubious Honda tactics, especially involving Bayle's older brother Christian, 'JMB' emerged double race winner to snatch the title by three points. It was a bitter pill to swallow for Cagiva and Stribos. Behind him his unnervingly quiet compatriot Pedro Tragter, riding a Honda, won the first moto of the >>

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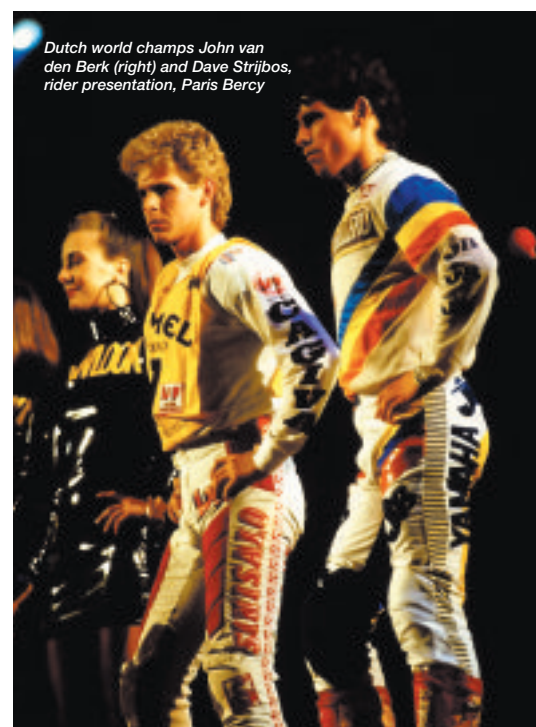
Classy Gert-Jan van Doorn
(Cagiva) fourth in 1988 US 250GP



Van den Berk (left) beats American rival
Rodney Smith in 1988 French 250GP



John van den Berk soars uphill
at Unadilla in 1988 US 250GP



Dutch world champs John van
den Berk (right) and Dave Strijbos,
rider presentation, Paris Bercy

Finnish GP and finished third in the series ahead of Alessandro Puzar and Mike Healey.

This result impressed Suzuki, who hired both Strijbos and Tragter for 1989. Initially this worked a treat. Davey mounted the podium at the first four rounds, dominating the Spanish Grand Prix, second in Italy and Poland and third in his hometown round at Oss. Then he wrecked himself and with Tragter also injured mid-season it was left to new boys Teus Visser, the cocky Marcel van Drunen – rostrum finishers at Hawkstone Park – and Edwin Evertsen (Suzuki) to fly the Dutch flag. Van Drunen and Evertsen ended the season top 10. In 250GPs John van den Berk, hampered by a mid-season ankle injury, finished third in the championship ahead of van Doorn who, unhappy with his new works Cagiva, switched back to Suzuki and promptly podiumed in Austria and Czecho!

Van den Berk moved to Michele Rinaldi's Chesterfield Suzuki for 1990, with his school friend Strijbos a 250GP rookie on a Kawasaki. 'VDB' retained his bronze medal behind team-mate Puzar though exhaustion caused by over-training afflicted his efforts, especially in the draining humidity of Unadilla. Strijbos, mentored by six-time GP winner Gerard Rond, conquered Dalecin in Czechoslovakia and finished fifth overall. It would be Davey's only ever 250GP victory. The former 125 champ slipped to seventh on a 250 Suzuki in 1991, one place ahead of series rookie Edwin Evertsen (Kawasaki) after they'd podiumed together in the opening Dutch GP at Mill, while van den Berk won a solitary moto in Finland. Meantime in the 1990 125 series Tragter, retained by Hamamatsu, finished seventh after winning

early doors at Halle, in his native sand, to chalk up his maiden grand prix success. And in 1991, after missing out on a tie-breaker with Bob Moore (KTM) in the British GP at Nantwich, he finished third in a series won by his Suzuki stablemate Stefan Everts.

Then the Motocross des Nations returned to the Dutch heartland of Valkenswaard. Van Doorn dazzled on a 500 Honda alongside Evertsen (250 Kawasaki) and Tragter (125 Suzuki) in an epic showdown with Belgium and the USA. Three points separated the three nations at the end of a fantastic third race, the Netherlands losing out on a tie-breaker for second with Belgium after stupendous efforts by Evertsen and van Doorn had the crowd in uproar!

Pedro Tragter finally nailed another 125 grand prix victory at Portugal's second round of 1992 in the new three shorter races per round format. Strijbos had been reunited with Jan de Groot in his JHK Honda squad alongside South African Greg Albertyn. The Dutch duo rose to the top mid-season, going one-two in successive rounds at Genk, in Belgium and the Swedish GP but Albertyn responded, leaving Strijbos and Tragter tied for second place. Strijbos nicked the verdict by virtue of his five race wins to Tragter's four and secured his fourth 125 silver medal. Van den Berk, making his return to the quarter litre class on a Suzuki, actually won the opening moto of the year in Spain and trounced everybody in Hungary mid-season to register his ninth and last grand prix win and ended up ninth overall.

The red-haired, freckled Edwin Evertsen, boasting the most beautiful girlfriend in the

250GP paddock, won the opening moto of the year in Valkenswaard and ended the day a stunning second to Everts. Race wins and rostrums in Sweden, Finland and Japan saw Edwin almost hunt down Bob Moore for the silver medal behind Moore's Yamaha team-mate Donny Schmit in a spectacular late-season surge. This turned out to be the zenith of Evertsen's brief GP career, possibly because his sensational ladyfriend departed! He drifted back to ninth in 1993, a season that saw Pedro Tragter's persistence finally rewarded after another herculean struggle with his Suzuki team-mate Yves Demaria and Strijbos...

Tragter won Italy's opener. Strijbos hit back at Mons, in Belgium, Tragter and Remy van Rees completing a Dutch rostrum lock-out. This trio did it again in the British GP at Lyng, Pedro this time triumphant! Demaria struck in Poland, where Strijbos drew a costly blank and Mickael Pichon (Honda) and Pit Beirer (Suzuki) edged Tragter off the rostrum. Tragter won again from Strijbos and van Rees back home in Berghem. Beirer bounced back at Holic in the Czech GP after double race winner Strijbos



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suffered another damaging DNF before Demaria nicked a tie-breaker with Davey in Germany. Andrea Bartolini (Honda) topped Baldasserona's slick blue-groove slopes to win the San Marino round from Chico Chiodi and Demaria. What a competitive season this was! But Tragter scored with nagging consistency. A close second to Demaria at Laguepie in France, where Stribos suffered a second successive drought and dropped off the title pace, prefaced another runner-up spot to Bartolini in Brazil's penultimate round. Finally, it was off to Manjimup for the only ever Australian 125GP, where 'Bartman' swept to his third victory of the year and Pedro, second overall, nailed a third world 125cc championship in seven years for the Netherlands.

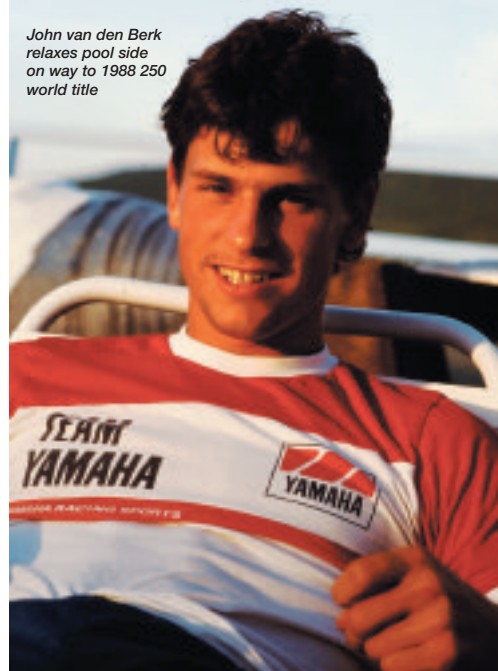
Reunited at Suzuki, Tragter and Stribos were left to fight over the bronze medal in 1994 behind Bob Moore and Chiodi. They traded race wins at Halle, in their home round, where Dave Stribos recorded the 27th and last grand prix victory of a stellar career but lost out to Tragter in the table, finishing fourth. But after several desultory seasons Gert-Jan van Doorn finally followed up his amazing 1991 MX des Nations ride and moved into 500GPs, winning the opener at Payerne, in Switzerland on a Honda! Unfortunately a mid-season injury cost him three rounds and he slipped to fourth overall. 'G-J' finished sixth in 1995. Van den Berk also moved on to a 500 that year, 11th in the series, while Tragter finished sixth on a 250 Suzuki. Van Doorn, on a 500 Sarholz Honda, was once more sixth in 1996, when 250GP journeyman Leon Giesbers shocked the open-classes with a wild card win at Lierop – the first grand prix victory for Kees van der Ven's fledgling Champ KTM team!

The evergreen Van Doorn soldiered on, sixth again in 1998 and eighth in 2000 before retiring after a remarkable 19-year career stretching back to 1983 when he and his close friend Henk van Mierlo (tragically paralysed in a practice accident) finished 20th and 21st in the 250 world championship. Stribos, back on a Kawasaki, finished fifth in the 1998 British 125GP at Foxhill and Remy van Rees – 19th in the 1998 250 series – triumphed there out of nowhere in 1999 to become the 10th Dutchman victorious in grands prix. Remy ended the year ninth behind Giesbers. Neither would ever win again while Pedro Tragter and Holland's most prolific winner prior to Jeffrey Herlings, Dave Stribos followed John van den Berk into retirement, the Netherlands losing its three world champions in the space of 12 months...

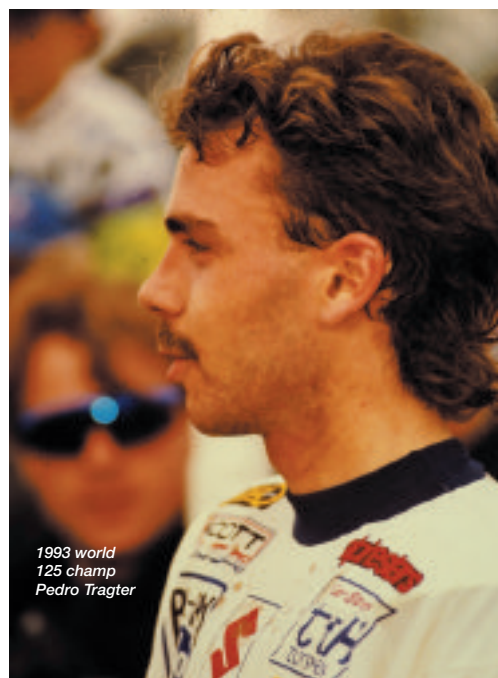
24 year-old Eric Eggers (KTM) won three of those weird single-race grands prix in 2001 and ended the year third with compatriot Marc de Reuver eighth. The tall, effervescent de Reuver, riding van der Ven's Champ KTM, won Teutschental's 2003 German 125 round. He almost singlehandedly dragged the Netherlands to second place behind Belgium in the 2004 MX of Nations, twice chasing home Stefan Everts on home soil in Lierop and won four GPs across six seasons – the last a Dutch MX1 round (Lierop again!) in 2008.

Two years later 15 year-old Jeffrey Herlings destroyed his rivals in the Dutch MX2 GP, just as 16 year-old Dave Stribos had done in the Dutch 125GP 26 summers before – and like Stribos, Herlings finished sixth in the world. Holland's second Golden Era had begun!

John van den Berk relaxes pool side on way to 1988 250 world title



All eyes on Pedro Tragter (125 Suzuki) at 1991 MX des



1993 world 125 champ Pedro Tragter



Van Doorn Everts and Tragter so nearly won the 1991 MX des at Valkenswaard



We nearly did it! Van Doorn after herculean third moto in MX des, Valkenswaard 1991

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**HUSKY RUNNER MAX
HIND SQUEEZES IN SOME
SUMMER SESSIONS TO SEE
HOW THE IMPROVEMENTS
HE'S MADE TO THE FC 250
ARE WORKING OUT...**

Words by Max Hind Photos by TooFast Media Group

Now that both the racing and test seasons are in full swing I'm finding myself ever so busy. Between running around the country making dirt bike videos featuring the UK's top youth and pro talent and being fortunate enough to be invited along to events across the UK and Europe to test the new 2017 motocross bikes I've had almost no time on my hands to give our FC250 long-termers the attention she deserves. This great little machine doesn't deserve that sort of neglect so as any responsible dirt bike owner would do I made sure I took her out to stretch her legs before the month was out.

I thought it would actually be quite nice to ride the FC250 just as she is this month. So we've left the bike pretty much alone with no big changes or new bolt-ons to speak of. We've done this simply so that I can just get on, ride and enjoy the bike for what it is as it stands and that's a pretty damn good and enjoyable machine. So instead of telling you about the all the changes we've made this month or jabbering about the new factory bling bits we've installed I'm just going to talk

about all the things I really like and enjoy about the Husqvarna FC 250.

Just as a little recap, the few things we've already done to the bike previously in the year include; fitting an oversized front disc, installing a HGS pipe system and remapping the machine. These small changes, adjustments and additions have helped make a good bike even better, so understandably I was excited to get out and give the bike a proper ride.

We headed to Washbrook Farm on a typically wet Wednesday morning in July (Washy is open on a few Wednesday's throughout the summer hols.) Fortunately the weather turned around and the sun showed its face in the end, although that didn't prevent the bike from getting filthy dirty in the process – having to jet wash your bike in July just seems criminal to me! But what can you do?

I actually managed to log three solid 30 minute motos throughout the day – and that's something that I almost never do. I guess that is just a testament to how truly effortless and fun the Husky is to ride. Coming from a pretty much exclusive





two-stroke background I'm forever surprised about how much energy I can save by riding a four-stroke motocross bike efficiently.

Throughout the day I really felt that the bike was super easy to corner, the combo of the bigger front disc, the overall agility of the machine and the remap/HGS pipe allowed me to come into the corners hotter, turn and carve easier and power out better. I felt the bike was really strong in these areas.

In other areas however I felt that the bike could still be improved, particularly in the suspension department. It really wasn't all too busy on the day which meant that the track didn't cut up massively and the bumps were few and far between. However this didn't prevent the regular spats of serious headshake I encountered. I definitely think we could improve the suspension/handling somewhat and it may just be something we focus on at a later date.

Since my last 'Tested' article I've had a chance to ride the new 2017 Husqvarna range. Jumping from the new machines back to my 2016 bike has opened my eyes as to just how good some of the changes they have made really are. It wasn't until I tried out the 2017 bikes and made use of the revised map switch that I truly realised >>

how annoying and difficult to use the old set-up is.

The track was pretty damn slick during my first session and I didn't feel too comfortable at all. I wanted to check what map setting I was in because the aggressive setting would have been incredibly detrimental in those conditions. But I simply could not decipher what map the bike was set to while I was on track, something that is so easy to determine on the new machines. When I finally called it quits on that session I pulled in and checked what map I had been using. Low and behold I was in the aggressive mode. D'oh!

Another one of the new features that would have been useful in those seriously slick conditions is the new traction control system. It would have been really interesting to truly see the extent of its effectiveness in conditions such as that.

However as the day progressed the track got better and better and we had more and more fun onboard our Husqvarna FC 250.

Once we got home we decided it was about time we changed the rear tire. The original was looking pretty beat up and fortunately – with the help of my fellow DBR test team colleague Dan Grove – Metzeler had hooked us up with a garage full of tyres. We fitted the MC6 tyre ready to rip for the next time out. This tyre has a tread pattern optimised for the best grip in hard/medium ground conditions and is supposed to provide maximum contact feeling in all conditions for constant grip during hard acceleration. Perfect for the hard, sunbaked tracks we encounter throughout the summer months. I guess we'll put it to the test next time out!



**DBR
TESTED**



DBR TESTED HCR'S SECRET MAP

So one of the cool things about modern, fuel injected four stroke motocross bikes is the ability to fine tune them quickly and easily. By doing this you can have different settings for different types of tracks, terrain and conditions. There's no carb to take off and no jets to fiddle about with – you just need a laptop, the relevant software/connectors, the right know how and you're away.

You may have read in a previous edition of DBR just how impressed I was with the two different stock map settings that came on the stock FC 250 but what if I told you that it's possible to improve on these and get even more out of your bike?

Our go to man for all things technical – Roland from Hardcore Racing – suggested that we let him re-map the FC 250 to see what we reckon to his secret formula. He works with some of the top MX lads from youth riders right through to some of the top pros. Through many hours of testing Roland reckons he has dialled in the perfect map for us that will improve the bike all round, but particularly giving her more snap out of the corners.

Apparently this re-map will also help get the most out of the aftermarket HGS pipe we have on the bike (although Roland does say his map will also improve a stock bike).

Seeing as we were on the way past Roland's door to do some testing we thought it would be rude not to pop in and get the said re-map on the way to the track. Within minutes of arriving the seat was off, the laptop was plugged in and Roland was clicking away making

his secret adjustments.

I call it a laptop lightly – the equipment Roland was using looked like something NASA would use to launch the next Apollo mission. Apparently the 'laptop' and correct lead to plug into the Husky/KTM is a £3k investment, more importantly I reckon the knowledge acquired through thousands of hours of testing is even more valuable.

Starting the bike up for the first time after the re-map I'm sure it had a slightly different engine note, slightly deeper, a bit more aggressive when I blipped the throttle and an overall more ferocious snarl – so I was pretty excited to get on and give her a rip.

After a couple of 30 minute sessions I have to say I was pretty impressed with the re-mapped machine. She certainly had more punch out of the corners and she somehow also felt smoother than it did previously throughout the entire rev range. I was loving it.

Roland's understandably pretty guarded about his magic recipe – he assures me it's better than KFC's – so I can't give you any firm details about the technical changes he has made but I can tell you that it's a very cost effective upgrade for your bike. He has maps available for KTM/Husky 250s, 350s and 450s so if you want to know more give him a shout...

Price: £69.99
Supplier: hardcoreracing.co.uk
Contact: 01487 813755





DBR TESTED LEATT C FRAME KNEE BRACES

Much like the majority of dirt bike riders in the world my knees are pretty much shot. Too many years of hard landings, awkward twists and over stretching while in the pursuit of motocross glory have left me with some pretty dodgy joints – and I'm only 21!

It's common to hear riders state that without a decent set of knee braces to provide protection and support they wouldn't be able to get out and ride. That's most certainly true for myself and my knee braces provide me with the support and protection that I need to give me the confidence to get out on track and ride. This support and protection frequently comes at a price though whether it be the lack of comfort, the bulkiness or the awkwardness of trying to put the damn things on.

For this reason I've taken it upon myself to find the best solution to the wobbly knee problem. For the past few years I've been using an old set of Asterisk knee braces, they've been decent, not too bulky, but not overly comfortable. However these braces are now a few years old and the technology and design of knee braces has moved on. Are my knees as protected as I first thought? Are there more comfortable solutions out there? What's the best brace on the market? These were just a few of the questions swirling around my brain. In step Leatt with what is hopefully the solution to my knee brace woes.

The C frames are Leatt's answer to the knee brace conundrum. As we know Leatt is a company that's passionate about making action sports as safe as they can possibly be. Leatt have revolutionised the safety and protection world and for this reason alone I was super excited to get my hands on the C Frames to see what this forward thinking company have to offer in the world of knee protection.

The C Frame is a medically certified brace designed by Leatt's biomedical engineering team with the aim of further reducing injuries to the knee. The brace has been designed to eliminate excessive forces to the femur and tibia (that's the thigh and shin bone to us normal non-doctor

people) as well as reducing rotational forces to the ACL, MCL and meniscus. The hinge has been designed to last longer and to better replicate the natural movements of the knee joint. Overall Leatt have also tried to ensure that the brace is a comfortable as can be. But how does all of that techno jargon translate to on track performance? Well let me tell you...

The first thing I would say is that you should most definitely watch the video tutorial available on Leatt.com in order to get your brace set up correctly. Either that or have your new brace fitted by a pro in the know. This is imperative. If your brace is set up and/or fitted incorrectly than it could do more harm than good. As always when setting up a somewhat complex product such as this it takes some time at first to get it right. But once you know how it works and what you're doing you'll get the hang of slipping the braces on and off in no time. I have to say that the Velcro straps can be a little fiddly sometimes, which is a small drawback – especially when comparing to some of the other braces I've used in the past.

Once I'd actually got the braces on and set up they felt a little weird to begin with. My first few laps were plagued with a strange kind of alien feeling. But this is the same feeling you get whenever you change a major part of your riding set up. I remember this same feeling when I first threw on a pair of knee braces many years ago. After a few breaking-in laps to get used to these new braces I started to notice them less and less which is a good thing.

In comparison to my old braces these Leatts felt a bit bulkier around the actual knee cap, this is due to the rather substantial protection covering the cap. As you can see from the pictures this knee cap protection protrudes quite a bit and due to this I kept finding that I was getting caught up with the rad shroud on the bike when my knees were sitting quite high in the corners. This definitely wasn't ideal. Although the inside of the knee is kept very low profile in order to gain superior bike feel.

If these braces feel a little bulkier around the knee than that is more than made up for around the shin and lower leg. Every brace that I have ever tried in the past has been bulky and uncomfortable on my shins. Leatt have employed a super low profile shin bone plate with a load distribution pad that fits inside all boots and ensures that the brace is super comfortable on the shin. This made wearing the braces a lot more comfortable and using them for an extended period of time a lot more easy going.

The C frame hinge is a sweet piece of engineering that prevents hyperextension and helps prevent injury whilst also being compact and lightweight. The brace can be adjusted to 'lock out' at different points to suit you best, depending how much bend and flexibility you require.

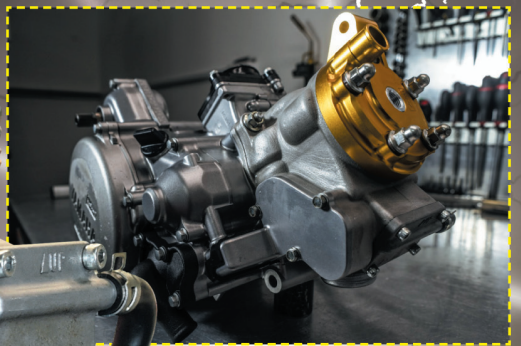
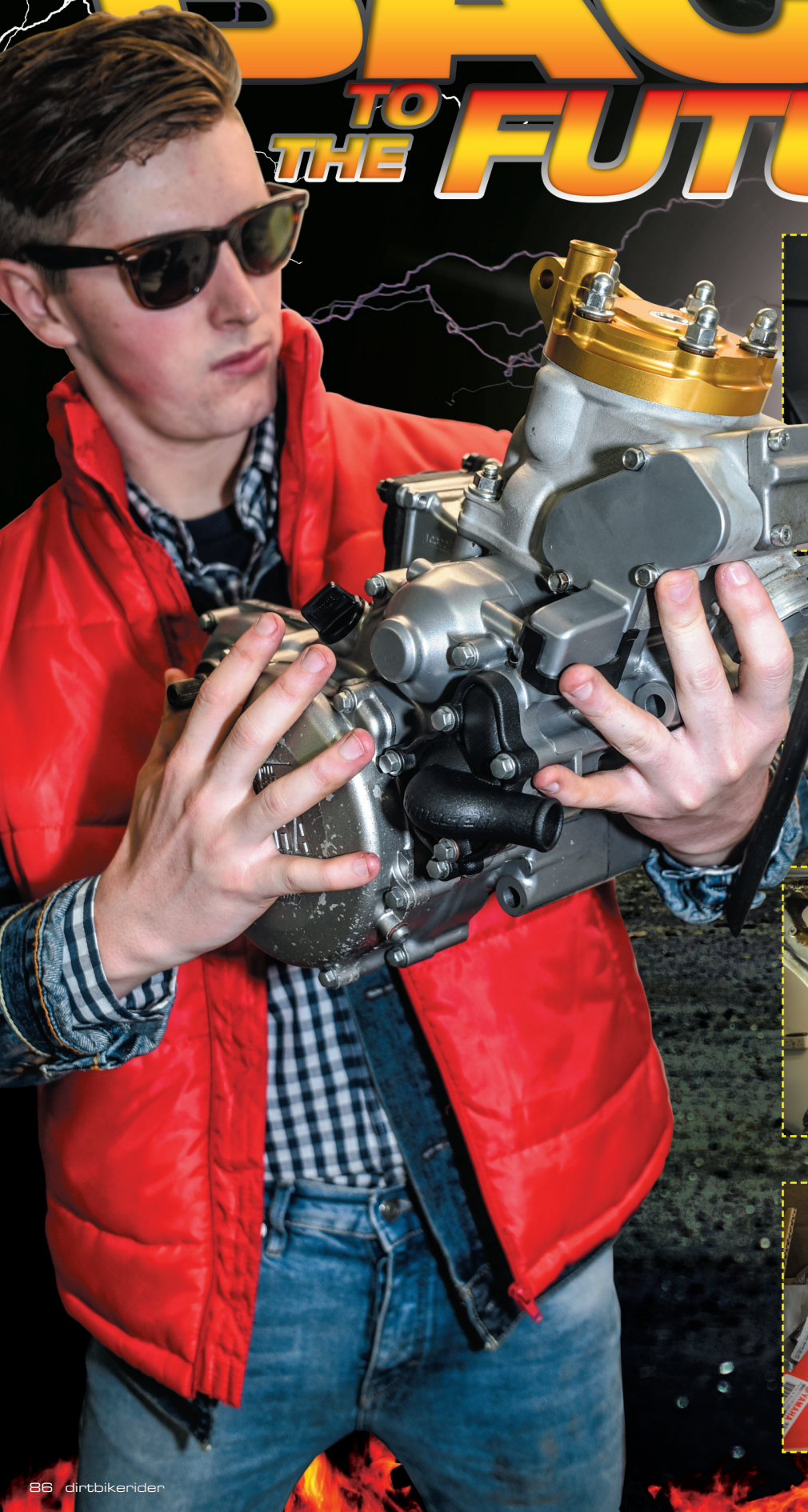
The main part of the brace is made up of an aluminium alloy and carbon fibre to provide strength while also being very lightweight.

Overall I felt protected, supported and comfortable while wearing the C frame braces which means that Leatt have succeeded in meeting the holy trinity of knee brace requirements. There are only a couple of minor little things that are somewhat annoying – they being the fiddly straps and the bulky knee cap protection that gets snagged – but so far so good and my knees survive uninjured or no more injured than they already were. Let's hope these Leatt C Frames keep them that way.

To check out the more technical advantages of the C frame braces and how the design helps prevent every sort of the knee injury I definitely recommend checking out the C Frame product video on Leatt's website...that'll give you all the specific technical info that I simply can't fit into my little review!

Price: £499.99 per pair
Supplier: apico.co.uk
Contact: 01282 473190

BACK TO THE FUTURE!



IT'S BEEN A BUSY FEW WEEKS IN OUR HILL VALLEY WORKSHOP WITH OLD DOC BROWN FINALLY FINISHED TINKERING WITH THE FLUX CAPACITOR - I RECKON OUR LITTLE STEED IS READY TO HIT THE MAGIC **88MPH...**

Words and photos by **Max Hind**

Hardcore Racing's Roland Shaw – our very own Doc Brown – has done with the tuning work and we're now at the stage of putting our little old YZinger back together again.

We want this bike to be special. So with that picture of awesomeness in our minds there were quite a few components on the bike that just didn't fit the bill and desperately needed replacing. In order to allow us to do things properly and keep our 125 a real YZ at its core, Yamaha UK swooped in to help us out with all the genuine parts that we could ever dream of!

To say we were pumped would be an

understatement. Yamaha have an insanely comprehensive and damn right easy to use spare parts ordering system. You can literally go online and see a big exploded diagram of every single component on the bike, click the bits you need and save it as a PDF to take in or email to your local Yamaha dealer. When it comes to the really important parts for your bike – the vital organs so to speak – you just can't beat the Jap quality. As Yamaha says, 'There are parts, and there are genuine Yamaha parts!'

We had quite an ample list of bits that we desired which included all the usual engine components such as bearings, seals, conrod, gaskets, crank and the like. Yamaha UK also hooked us up with a brand spanking new

genuine Yamaha clutch as well as all the little components that often get forgotten – such as new suspension linkage, bearings, a steering head, a throttle cable, the list just goes on. While we were at it we thought we'd also replace a couple of gears that were worn. Damn, this is going to be one awesome little machine once it's complete!

So after Doc's tried and proven experimentation's we've now found some extra horses to boost our YZ's performance. With that in mind we also wanted to make sure that we upped the game in the cooling department in order to keep everything sweet when our little YZ is on song. We have a three stage plan to achieve this:

Stage 1: Boyesen SuperCooler

The awesome guys from Apico hooked us up with another Boyesen SuperCooler. I say 'another' because I ran one of these on my CRF250R long-term back in 2014. We did some pretty Doc Brown-esque scientific testing back then measuring engine temperature in stock form and then again with the Boyesen SuperCooler installed. The results were very impressive showing a significant reduction in engine temperature with the Boyesen system in place. So naturally I was keen to get one of these coolers on the YZ to help handle the extra ponies we've found. These coolers are really high quality components and they also look pretty trick on the bike too. Check out the Apico website (www.apico.co.uk) to find your local stockist.



Stage 2: Hardcore Race Rads

The standard radiators on the YZ125 were pretty beat up to be honest – courtesy of a few too many dinner dates with the dirt on my behalf. They were definitely not worthy of going back on our project bike. Luckily for us Hardcore Racing actually manufactures their own radiators in Belgium – what will that whacky Doc come up with next?

There's actually a nice story to these rads – anyone who remembers Mickael Pichon's exquisite factory bikes with the handmade alloy tanks and rads will be pleased to know that the

Hardcore Race Rads are handmade by the very same guy!

The HCRs have one extra core over the standard radiators (12 rather than 11). They were developed in the sand so the fins have larger air gaps than standard to allow for more airflow but this also helps with anti clagging. The radiators also boast strengthening rods which will help them stand up to the abuse that we MX riders throw at them. You'll see from the photos that the welding is beautiful – these really are sweet (and important) accessories to add on to our bike. Visit www.motocrossdirect.co.uk for more info.



Stage 3: VHM Head

The third and final stage in our quest for improved cooling comes in the form of fitting the very well respected VHM cylinder head to our bike. Not only does this product offer improved cooling but you can also change the insert to adjust head volume or squish clearance in order to gain the ultimate performance out of the machine. So naturally we have an insert to match our newly sorted motor.

MORE GOODIES!

VForce 3 reed block

V-Force is at the forefront of reed technology. They are highly regarded as a great bolt on performance enhancing product, so when Roland from Hardcore Racing offered to install a set while he was doing the engine build we jumped at the chance. This reed and block combo increases throttle response off the bottom while also providing better mid-range torque. You don't walk past too many bikes in the EMX125 paddock without seeing one of these bad boys.

Boyesen clutch cover

You may have seen in last month's episode that

we had the engine cases professionally cleaned in Hardcore Racing's vapour blaster. However the clutch cover itself was pretty beat up and beyond salvage due to five years of steel toe capped MX boots pounding it to death. With so much effort going in to make this bike both ride great and look fantastic it wouldn't have seemed right to leave that scruffy looking clutch cover on the bike. Fortunately for us the guys at Apico have the stunning Boyesen Clutch covers in stock. These things not only look totally 'factory' but they are actually made out of a really durable material in order to stand up to the neglect that us riders throw at them. I think you'll agree that this cover really is the icing on the cake when looking at the photos of the finished engine all put together once again.



DBR PROJECT PILOT JOE CADWALLADER'S FINALLY SHRUGGED OFF HIS VIRUS AND IS FIRED UP TO END THE SEASON ON A HIGH...

Words by Sean Lawless Photos by Nuno Laranjeira

When we last caught up with our DBR Project pilot Joe Cadwallader he was waiting on the results of some blood tests to see if the virus he'd been suffering from was finally out of his system.

Unfortunately it wasn't which meant he was forced to sit out an RMJ Academy training session in Holland. It was a big blow for the 17-year-old but academy boss Rich-Mike Jones knew that pushing him too hard when he was still ill would have had a negative effect.

"It was a hard call to make but actually an easy decision to take," says Rich-Mike. "We need him to be fit and putting too much physical strain on him and his immune system would have been counter-productive."

But it's not all doom and gloom this month and the good news is that Joe's finally free of the virus and was back in action at round five of the Michelin MX Nationals at Wakes Colne in mid-August on the RMJ Academy FC 250 Husqvarna UK machine.

"Wakes Colne started off well for me with a fifth in qualifying which is my best yet," says Joe. "For one lap I could do it but when it came to the races my fitness dragged me back. In the first race I was in third and then went down but got back up to seventh. Then I went 8-8-10 for eighth overall."

While Joe's been sick it's been a case of training intelligently around his illness and the results of his specially adapted programme were evident in his first race back.

"I've had to slacken off a bit with my training and avoid any really hard exercise. I've been working on my speed doing some sprint laps and sprint corners and there's a big improvement. I just need to build it into racing because I know my practice speed is real high at the moment.

"Henry Williams does a lot of training with us and I'm only half-a-second off his lap times most laps and he can win MX2 when he races.

"I think I lost quite a lot of fitness with the virus and that showed at Wakes Colne – I felt like I ran out of steam there. I feel a bit better now and when I practice motos it's okay but the pressure of being in a race situation makes a difference. It takes more out of me. It's very frustrating because I know I can be up there."

Joe's illness has also limited the amount of time he's been able to work on set-up but now he's recovered it's full steam ahead.

"We're doing quite a lot of suspension testing with the race bike with Matty from Evo-Tech and the power is great so I'm definitely feeling positive going into the last couple of rounds. My next race is the Maxxis MX2 at Preston Docks and I rode there recently and felt good."

Although at times this season it's felt as though Joe's been taking a step forward followed by two steps back Rich-Mike can see that his programme is paying off.

"Joe's better now but he's obviously lost fitness because he wasn't able to train," he says. "It's been a managing process and we've been trying to get him fit again bit by bit using a lot of bike training."

"We've still been able to work on his one-lap speed and his technique and he's done really well. His pace over a single lap has come on really, really well – obviously as you get faster it's more tiring riding so he needs to be fitter but I'm confident that will come with time now he's not ill."

DBR will be following Joe and the RMJ Academy Husqvarna every month so stay tuned for further updates...

Project





BLUES

BROTHERS!

**RYAN HOUGHTON GETS LOOSE WITH
YAMAHA'S PAIR OF MX FOUR-POPPERS...**

Words by Ryan Houghton Photos by Juan Pablo Acevedo and Redeye



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For further information on the MX Pro Tour and the 2017 YZ models, visit your local Yamaha dealer or go to www.yamaha-motor.eu/uk.

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Follow us on 





YZ250F

We'll start with the YZ250F and it really is a lovely bike to ride. It's not necessarily the prettiest thing in the world – a bit of a lump really – because it has those massive rad scoops and air box on the front. In fairness when you get out there and ride the Yam they don't feel as big as they look even though I still think they could shift a few pounds but couldn't we all.

Yamaha say that their new 250 'crosser' benefits from a range of important technical changes – such as an all-new reverse cylinder head – that are aimed at delivering increased performance and enhanced rideability. Yamaha have aimed to improve the acceleration and pulling power in the mid-to-high rev range and they have done this by gearing all their engine changes around efficiency. They have made stronger valve springs and a new con-rod to cope with the increased engine performance, redesigned the exhaust port and brought in a new big bore front pipe to achieve optimal intake/exhaust balance.

While it's clear that Yamaha have been working hard on improving the mid to top power on the 250 I didn't feel as though it had enough grunt at the top end – it just seems to stop pulling just as you need it which is a shame. On the other hand I have to say the 250F has one of the best bottom to mid power ranges I've experienced in a

while. It has amazing bottom end power and pick up out of the corners is excellent.

Other than that top end issue there are loads of other things I like about the Yam. A new remapped ECU with revised ignition timing is mega. Basically the ECU cuts in at high rpm and features a rev limiter that gives improved over-rev feeling. Braaaaaap!

Ergonomically, Yamaha have dropped the footpegs by 5mm like they did on the 2016 450F and it makes the bike extremely nimble and easy to turn. I felt myself being able to push the front end hard into corners and then transition the control to the rear extremely easily. The brakes are pretty sharp this year after the 245mm rear disc gets the same heat resistant steel as the as the front 270mm stopper. I was also impressed at how easy the 250 is to start as like a spanner brain I stalled it in one session. She was hot as hell but started first kick...now that is handy!

Another improvement I noticed was Yam have changed the clips holding on the airbox/rad scoops. It's a good job they have because it was so easy to knock the two bolts off the side when you were riding, and you ended up with just one holding it on. If I was a looking to buy a good solid machine as an amateur rider then I would defo recommend the 250F because it is so easy to ride.



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Optional extras!

The GYTR experience . . .

As an added extra Yamaha offer competition riders Genuine Yamaha Technology Racing (GYTR) parts for both four-stroke models but I still don't see the point in spending all that more money for a very similar bike. Personally I think you're better off buying the standard one and adding the bits yourself. The GYTR bike is a little faster on both 250 and 450 models and looks cooler but as I've said before you don't need any more power so if I was you I'd save your wonga.



YZF450F

For those of expecting a brand new bike you might be disappointed but for people like me who really enjoyed the 2016 MX1 bike then never fear.

The bike is very much the same as last year with a few minor improvements. Yamaha have given the 450 a new rear brake because the 2016 was prone to fading. I'm very heavy on rear brakes normally so I have to run a factory Brembo on my race bike but I didn't feel any fade at all in the new 2017 Yams so all good there.

As usual the power of the Yam is serious. It is so bloody fast and I feel this works really well on a nice big open fast flowing track. But I think that in the tight corners when you are getting on the gas you may find yourself playing with the clutch trying to keep that front end down and tame that power!

I would say if you buy the 450 make sure you get the mapping dialled in for you. The key here is that it's so easy to use the Yamaha power tuner. The tuner can be used without the need of a laptop and if you go on their website they have all sorts of maps you can copy onto your bike. Personally I would mellow down and spread the power out just making it easier on your arms and shoulders.

I really like the suspension on the new models. All I did was set the sag and I was away – the stuff is pretty plush. So if it's the correct spring for you then it will be pretty good.





Technical Specifications

YZ250F

Displacement: 250cc
Bore and stroke: 77 x 53.6mm
Transmission: 5 gears
Fuel system: Fuel Injection
Front suspension: KYB AOS forks
Rear suspension: KYB shock
Suspension travel front/rear: 310/315mm
Front/rear brakes: Disc brake 270/245mm
Wheel base: 1475mm
Ground clearance: 330mm
Seat height: 965mm
Fuel capacity: 7.5 litres
Weight: 105kg

YZ450F

Displacement: 449cc
Bore and stroke: 97 x 60.8mm
Transmission: 5 gears
Fuel system: Fuel Injection
Front suspension: KYB AOS forks
Rear suspension: KYB shock
Suspension travel front/rear: 310/315mm
Front/rear brakes: Disc brake 270/245mm
Wheel base: 1480mm
Ground clearance: 330mm
Seat height: 965mm
Fuel capacity: 7.5 litres
Weight: 112kg

MALCOLM RATHMELL

A LIFE LESS ORDINARY

GP motocrosser, world trials contender, successful businessman and mentor to one of extreme enduros biggest names — Malcolm Rathmell's influence on off-road sport has been huge (although he'd probably say we're talking bollocks)...

Words by Sean Lawless Photos by Nuno Laranjeira,
TMX Archives, Mortons Archives

Here's a good one for you off-road fact fans — who's the only rider to race motocross grands prix and finish top three in the World Trials Championship?

I'd love to leave you feverishly flicking through piles of yellowing magazines or scouring the internet for an answer but — seeing as the next few thousand words are going to be all about him — there's not much point.

To someone my age who started riding trials in the late '70s, Malcolm Rathmell — along with his great friend, rival and sparring partner Martin

Lampkin — is a legendary figure. To this day I can't shake the image of a gloveless Malc, blond hair flowing out of his helmet, oozing style as he cleaned another rocky stream section on his Montesa. If Yorkshiremen did glamour then he was the pin-up boy...

Now 67 and boss of UK Sherco importer MRS, his blond locks may be a distant memory but he still looks in great shape and is as matter-of-fact as only a Yorkshireman can be.

"Morning Seamus," he says. "You're getting a gut on you!"

>>







Cheers Malc! Good to see you too...

There's a stereotype of Yorkshire people being blunt, straight-talkers – that 'I say what I bloody well like and like what I bloody well say' sort of thing – and Malc certainly ticks a lot of boxes in that respect. Not that that's a bad thing. I'd rather hear an honest opinion than have smoke blown up my arse any day of the week.

"I'm Yorkshire born and bred and proud of it," he says. "I was born in Otley, lived at Timble, went to school at Fewston which is a village near Timble. Otley School of Learning after that until I was 15 and then joined the Forestry Commission where I did a bit of everything for seven years. Fencing, draining, planting, felling – and it was good for practice. That was the best bit of it. You could spend your lunchtimes on your bike."

We're sat in Malc's office in Bishop Thornton which can't, as the crow flies, be more than 15 miles from his birthplace. Timble and Fewston are even closer and pretty much everywhere you look is prime trials country. Addingham Moorside and Pately Bridge are nearby, the towns of Yeadon and Guiseley are a stone's throw away and then there's Silsden – seat of the Lampkin clan – just down the road.

This is the heartland of UK trials and, born into a motorcycle-mad family, Malc was destined to ride although the path he'd take – trials or motocross – wasn't as clear cut.

"I've not really had a choice – bikes, bikes or bikes! I used to get a bollocking at school because first thing in the morning you had to write about what you did last night and five days a week I wrote 'I rode my bike last night'. That was it.

"My dad Eric got me a rigid Bantam of my own when I was about nine which I put into scrambles trim and I scrambled that around a field for a couple of years.

"My father started riding local trials after the war and when I was a kid there was always a bike there so I'd siphon petrol out of his car and ride whatever bike was available. He was big mates with [TMX trials correspondent] Barry Robinson and Barry always had a bike or a couple of bikes stood in our spot. We lived in a cottage in the middle of fields and woods so it was ideal for spending time on bikes.

"Half the Ilkley Motor Club used to leave their bikes up at my father's spot so there was always something there to ride. Whoever was daft enough to leave their bike there with petrol in got it used."

Eric was heavily involved in the Ilkley club



Malc and his Montesa go clean through a section at the Alan Trophy Trial in 1981

Eric Morecambe – or perhaps a time travelling Vic Reeves – watches on as Malc wrestles with that Suzuki back in 1978



and Malc was roped in at an early age.

"Dad was Clerk of the Course for all the Ilkley events and had a pillion on his Ajay so I spent my younger years doing laps of the Ilkley Grand National course and the Scott course on the back of him carrying a bag of flags. When he stopped I'd run off and stick a flag in."

By now you will have read – or flicked past – an interview I did with Graham Jarvis the week before where I say he's arguably Britain's best ever trials rider who doesn't have the surname Lampkin. However, after running through Malc's record I reckon I've got that wrong.

Malc's won the British title six times, taken the same number of Scott Trial wins and won the SSDT twice. He was also European champion in 1974 – the year before the series was upgraded to world status – and for seven years, from 1971 to '77, was never out of the European/world top three. Add to that his 11

world round wins and it's an impressive tally.

But it was motocross – or scrambling – that a young Malc was most interested in.

"I was more into scrambling and most weekends we went to a local scramble. My dad used to do Tony Cook's bikes. I think he was Yorkshire Centre champion a couple of years. He used to come up every week and have his bikes done – I think my dad had more interest in scrambles than trials.

"But both my mum and dad insisted that I learned to ride a trials bike because if you can ride a trials bike you can ride any bike. I went from a Bantam to a 150cc Triumph Terrier and then I got a Greeves Hawkstone when I was about 14 or 15. I had my own private scrambles track so I was there every night and Tony Cook used to come up Saturday mornings."

After a shrewd deal to upgrade his machinery, Malc was then given the chance

thanks to Pete Edmondson – father of former world enduro champion Paul – to get his hands on his most competitive bike so far.

"I swapped the two or three bikes I had for a C15 BSA which I rode for about six months and then I got the chance of a Tiger Cub from the brother of a butcher in Otley who helped me a little bit. He'd had a lot of problems with it and it had gone back to the factory because they'd forgot to drill some holes in the crankcases for the oil to return.

"So this came up in Pete Edmondson's shop in Otley and with it having all these problems it was cheap so I cashed the BSA in for this Tiger Cub. Eddy gave me it on a glad and sorry – glad I bought it, sorry I can't pay for it – which helped me for six months as I paid for it as we went along."

Malc made his competition debut in a Bradford centre trial and in his first national – >>



1980 and Malc's making a splash on the 350cc Jim Sandiford Montesa



A passion for motorcycling has kept Malc looking – and feeling – fairly youthful...



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Full gas at the 1971 ISDT on the 490cc Cheney Triumph

LIFE AFTER RIDING

A brief update . . .

After six years running the hotel Malc and Rhoda were ready for a change.

Malc had stayed involved in the sport, managing the Yorkshire Inter Centre team and in 1989 he was training the ACU's under 21 team which included Rob Crawford, Steve Colley, Graham Jarvis, Wayne Braybrook, Adam Norris and Rob Warner. His approach was ahead of its time with regular physical evaluations at Liverpool University and a bonus system for riders.

Then, at the 1990 British world round at Merthyr, he was approached by an Italian with a proposition that would change the course of his life.

"I came out of the hotel about seven o'clock in the morning and this bloke got hold of me and said 'are you interested to do Aprilia?'. They were looking for someone to do trials and a little bit of enduro and that's how we got back into it. We got a few bits of product and then Graham [Jarvis] came to live with us and it all started again."

Scorpa followed in '93 and, thanks to this association with Marc Teissier, when the Frenchman revived the famous Bultaco name that quickly evolved into Sherco it was Malc who he wanted on board.



the Clayton Trial – when he was still 16 he beat Sammy Miller, the reigning British champion.

Despite this early success he was still more passionate about scrambling and started racing when he was 17.

"I had some decent rides on the Cub and got a bit of help from Henry Vale at the Triumph factory for a couple of years. In among all this the butcher that I spoke about had a Greeves scrambler which he never hardly rode so he lent me it.

"At that time you did trials from the Scott to the Scottish and you did scrambles from the Scottish to the Scott. So Eric Atkinson – that was the butcher in Otley – lent me the bike for that summer.

"You couldn't ride until you were 16 so I did a full year of trials and then when I was 17 it was half trials and half scrambles and I went all right on this Greeves. Triumph was just finishing then and I needed a trials bike so Pete Eddy said that Bill Brooker down at Greeves was looking for someone up here to ride. We jumped in Eddy's car, went down to Thundersley and came back with a 250, a 360 and a trials bike. That was a good trip."

After riding for Greeves in '68 and '69 he

signed for the Bultaco factory in 1970 for motocross.

"I did my first GP that year in Spain. At that time they only had one bike so they sent it over here for me to use and then for the Spanish Grand Prix I had to fly it back with me as hand baggage to Barcelona. I just wheeled it across the Tarmac. That's how it was, it was a different world to what it is now. I don't think I'd even have to drain the petrol out of it.

"I didn't do a full series – some clashed with events like the Scottish – and I did a couple the year after but I was doing mostly trials by then. I rode 250 British championship in 1970 and finished sixth or seventh, I can't remember."

Malc didn't score any GP points but back then they were only paid out to 10th and among his competitors were riders of the calibre of Joel Robert, Sylvain Geboers and Roger De Coster. So while it wasn't an earth-shattering debut it was a firm foundation to build on – but he was being steered in a different direction.

"It was old man [Francesco] Bulto who got me to change back to trials. Sammy Miller was about to retire and I think Bultaco wanted someone to replace him and because I was riding not bad in trials they picked me."

What Malc doesn't mention is that in between racing 250 GPs he also finished that year's European Trials Championship in fifth, despite only competing in three rounds.

So for 1971 he alternated between motocross and trials – with plenty of success in both disciplines – before returning to trials full-time in 1972.

"My best scrambles results at that time were two thirds at one meeting in the British championship and I'd also won a couple of national trials. I suppose it was 50/50. My results were probably a bit better in trials but scrambling was more enjoyable. I should probably have continued with scrambling. With trials it happens, with scrambling you make it happen. Who knows?"

Malc was second in the 1971 Euro trials series. The same year he won the British Experts with a broken wrist sustained at the Scott Trial – where he'd also broken his ankle – and carried this form into the 1972 season when he was again second in Europe and claimed his first British title.

After taking his first SSDT win he slipped to third in Europe in 1973 and tried to get out of his Bultaco contract in favour of another iconic >>>

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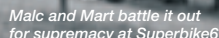
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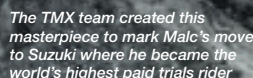
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Malc's switch to Montesa wasn't widely regarded as a smart move but his experience, talent and technical knowledge made him an ideal choice for the Spanish factory as it looked to expand its range of machinery.

Malc had won three rounds, so had Mart and Vesty had won four. The title was balanced on a knife edge but the Montesa factory had a surprise in store for its star rider.



Malc on Mart...



"All of a sudden this copper comes out of a bar, gets his truncheon out and whacks him hard across the back of his head. Mart had nicked his bike!"



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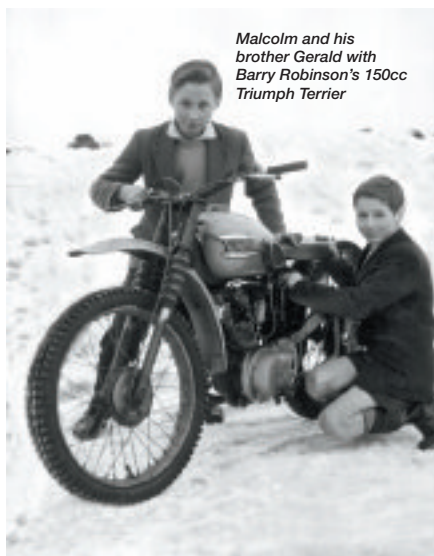
Perms ahoy ahead of the 1978 SSDT as Malc shares a joke with Mick Andrews



Receiving a lifetime achievement award from the FIM in 2013



Malcolm and his brother Gerald with Barry Robinson's 150cc Triumph Terrier



"Pedro Pi was team manager then. They insisted on taking the bike back after Germany to go through it. I'd ridden the six-speed all year but they brought it back for Czecho and they'd put a five-speed box in it."

Mick Andrews won the trial with Malc and Mart tied for second. When the number of cleans were counted Mart just edged it which gave him the title.

"I don't know if they'd brought the normal bike back whether I'd have won it or I wouldn't have won it – it's no excuse, it was the same bloody bike anyway. We had the fastest trip back from Czecho ever – we were home for breakfast!"

Malc's still got four prototypes with different frames, engines and gearboxes that eventually became the production 348. Montesa's decision to hand him a five-speed version for the final round may or may not have been flawed but its choice of development rider certainly wasn't and the 348 became the biggest-selling trials bike of all time.

After staying with Montesa in '76 and '77 – finishing second and third in the world – he was lured away to join Suzuki and became the highest paid trials rider in the world. Unfortunately, the bike wasn't nearly as good as the pay cheque...

"In 1978 they wanted someone to ride Suzuki and I suppose everyone was hoping the Japanese were going to come in with a trials bike. Kawasaki were trying at the time and Honda so the Japanese were having a go and it was an opportunity to be involved with it."

Suzuki importer Graham Beamish handled the two-year contract which had a one-year get-out clause on both sides and, after a season that saw Malc slip to 14th in the world, both parties were thankful for it.

"We worked with Mick Whitlock to try and sort the frame out. Everything was wrong with it to be honest but having worked with Montesa I knew there was nothing that couldn't be put right if we'd had the gear."

"With Mick we made new swinging arms, new frames – changed all the geometry. We copied a Montesa frame and god knows what else but it just didn't work together with the engine and to get stuff done for the engine was impossible but Graham was absolutely brilliant >>

HIGHLIGHTS

The best bits . . .

The historical importance of the Scott Trial can't be under-estimated. The time and observation event – the toughest one-day trial in the world – is over 100 years old and Malc has been involved with it for more than half of this period.

From his early days helping his dad mark out the course to winning it six times to helping Graham Jarvis win it a record nine times, the Scott Trial remains close to his heart.

"I think my Scott wins are the highlight of my career. You've got to be organised and prepared – if you're not 100 per cent then forget about it."

Graham's trials riding career is briefly documented earlier in this month's magazine and Malc gets an even briefer mention as his mentor. No insult was intended – the feature is about Graham's life after trials – but perhaps this is as good a place as any to flesh out their relationship a little.

It's clear that Malc is very proud of the way

his protégé has risen to the top of extreme enduros after moving to Yorkshire to live with the Rathmell family as a teenager.

"Graham stuck it out and there were times that I didn't think he would. He got some stick but he always came back for more. He was semi-knackered when he left us. He had two knackered knees and a knackered back. I think everything he's done now he learned from the Scott Trial."

While Graham undoubtedly benefitted from having Malc in his corner, he also gave Malc the opportunity to once again travel the world with – more often than not – his old mate in tow. He doesn't mention him by name but I'm guessing Mart's on his mind as our interview concludes.

"I can honestly say I enjoyed every minute through my riding career and through Graham's. It was good because I did it all again. It was like we had a second lap of everything."



Malc and that lovely Suzuki at the '78 British Experts trial in Rhayader



Looking surprisingly hot in their finest summer dresses, Mart and Malc stop for liquid refreshment during the Annual International Pram Race from Silsden to Addingham.

"At the time there were 15 pubs in Silsden and seven pubs in Addingham," says Malc. "I think we had 23 pints that day and we were in training then n'all."



and we remained good mates long after that.”

Used to working with a European manufacturer, Malc found himself becoming increasingly frustrated as he struggled to make the Suzuki competitive.

“The biggest problem was I’d been used to slipping over to Barcelona if I needed to do any work on it and with Japan if you wanted something changing it was three months and by then half your championship had gone.

“You went to Barcelona and got the welder out and got the hacksaw out and you did it. The downside was you’d be ready to go training at 9am and the bike wouldn’t be ready. So you’d wait and wait and by 3pm it would be ready – and then everyone would go to lunch! You wouldn’t start your day’s testing until 5pm.

“It’s still the same now – I think that’s just how the Spanish are – but they were great to work with. Just a little bit different from Yorkshire.”

So for 1979 he went from being the world’s highest-earning trials rider to one of the lowest...

“Montesa had taken someone else on so there wasn’t a place but they’d do me a bike and bits and a bonus system. I won the Scottish and some world rounds so I thought it was a good time to sort things out and got another three-year contract with them.”

Finishing fifth in the world, Malc also won his fifth British title but after a decade at the top his star was waning. He won his final British championship in 1981 but slipped out of the world top 10 and needed a back operation. The following year he called it quits, returning once to ride the Scott in 1983 when he finished fifth.

Together with wife Rhoda he bought a hotel in Grassington and prepared to settle into retirement but even if he thought he’d finished with trials, trials hadn’t finished with him.

“The first weekend we opened it was the

world trial at Pately Bridge so we were full of riders. We had 42 people staying. We had Bill Wilkinson behind the bar, Don Smith serving on.

“All the Spanish Federation team would come back to stay between the England and Ireland world rounds. We even had Jordi Tarres staying in the car park. They used to ride their Montys around the square and cause havoc.”

Like all sportsman of his calibre, Malc openly admits that throughout his career his prime motivation was winning but his Yorkshire pragmatism kicks in when I ask him whether he regrets not winning the 1975 world championship.

“Not at all,” he replies without a moment’s though. “It doesn’t bother me. I did what I had to do at the time and that was it. What you win you win and what you don’t is gone. I’ve no regrets about that at all. If you don’t do it you don’t do it. It’s your own bloody fault isn’t it...”

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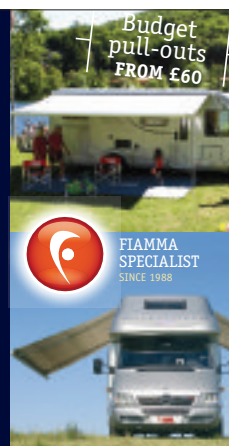
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IT'S A WRAP!

AFTER FINISHING OFF THE SERIES WITH BACK-TO-BACK WEEKENDERS AT PONTRILAS AND WHITBY THE 2016 PIRELLI BRITISH MASTERS CHAMPIONS HAVE FINALLY BEEN CROWNED...

Words and photos by **Mike Gurney**

In the 65cc class Alfie Jones sealed the title deal with yet another glorious clean sweep – with six overall round victories and 24 from 24 race wins it just doesn't get any better than that. Finishing runner-up in the championship stakes and third at Whitby was Billy Moriarty. Wildcard runner Finlay Boxhall went 2-2-3-3 claiming seaside second but in championship terms this was the fifth time Moriarty had plundered a series second best points haul. Finishing in fourth overall (third on series points) Ben Zeale made sure of championship third with another good show.

Following his best show of the season – all four wins at Pontrilas – Apico Husqvarna runner Jack Lindsay went to the finale as an odds-on favourite to lift the Smallies title. Machine issues in three of the four heats kept it all interesting to say the least. After dropping 29 points in Saturday action to double race winner and title threat Aaron Brown, a

relieved Jack took the crown going 4-3 on day two. Travis Steel and overall meeting winner Oliver Barr won the other two Whitby races – Brown went on to secure a fine championship silver as Steel pocketed the series bronze award.

Ending up with 16 moto wins in his account – and after totally demolishing all comers at four of the six rounds – Dominic Lancett has been the star turn in the BW85s. That said, Dom had to give sway at Whitby as wild-card entrant Eddie Jay Wade ran off with four superb wins.

Improving round by round in his BW rookie year – including outstanding podium shows at both Pontrilas and Whitby – Danny Clarke nailed it as the Pirelli Masters runner up. Battling Clarke series long and taking a top three points finish for a third time at Whitby, Jamie Smith made sure section bronze went home with him.

After lifting last year's Masters biggies crown and moving up into MX2 this year – Howard Wainwright made it back-to-back titles grabbing all four wins at Skelder Bank. Howie's series record reads four rounds won, two runner-up awards and a grand total of 13 moto wins. Consett crusher John Joe Wright finished the campaign with his best two results of the season. Taking the overall win at Ponty and then finishing third overall at the finale meant JJ's total reward was series second.

Saving his best overall result until last (including the fastest lap in heat four) Mitchell Warhurst was the Skelder MX2 runner-up and was fifth in the final standings – that would have been so much better had he not missed out on round three. In a tight tussle for series third Ben Burridge ultimately came out on top – his fourth overall finish and better final round score edging out Jake Parker.

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FINAL CHAMPIONSHIP STANDINGS

MX2

1 Howard Wainwright 1028, 2 John Joe Wright 911,
3 Ben Burridge 813, 4 Jake Parker 810,
5 Mitchell Warhurst 767, 6 Kieran Yorke 706

BW85

1 Dominic Lancett 1052, 2 Danny Clarke 883,
3 Jamie Smith 861, 4 Ryan Mundell 834,
5 Aaron McLoughlin 810, 6 Jacob Russell 739

SW85

1 Jack Lindsay 1005, 2 Aaron Brown 948,
3 Travis Steel 859, 4 Cameron Jackson 798,
5 Mitchell Raine 756, 6 Charlie Palmer 753

Junior 65



1 Alfie Jones 1080, 2 Billy Moriarty 1004,
3 Ben Zeale 866, 4 Tristan Daniels 829,
5 Charlie Irwin 814, 6 Harry West 808



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SPOTLIGHT ON...

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More than a decade after his Apico Husqvarna team leader Steven Clarke first took the #511 plate to youth championship glory fellow Black Country boy Jack Lindsay has done it again in 2016. As this year's Pirelli Masters SW85 champ Jack will hoping this is just the first step to emulating some his mentor's achievements. It's fair to say Jack hasn't had the best of luck in previous seasons and this year marks a real turning point.

Before JL#511 jetted off for a well earned Tenerife holiday – but still training hard in the sunshine we hear – Rage had a word...

Rage: Hi Jack, Congratulations on a great season generally and your Masters series win. We hear the final round was a bit stressful for you – apart from winning the title what are your other favourite memories of the championship?

JL: "Thank you. Yeah, day one at Whitby was a real nightmare. I had a front puncture in race one which took me from first to finish 10th and then in race two I had plug trouble. I was running second in the early laps of heat two but with the bike not right ended up 11th. After that, I decided on Sunday I was going to go out and just do what I had to do but when I went out for my sighting lap I realised I had no back brake. I rode that race sensible staying in control, and fourth place was good enough to win the championship. Race four, I just enjoyed myself with the pressure off.

"My favourite memory of this series has to be winning the title but round five came very close

as I took four straight wins. That result at Pontrilas together with the help and support of Richard-Mike Jones, Ashley Wilde and Adam Wells boosted my confidence and helped me believe in myself even more."

Rage: What's it like being on the Apico Husqvarna Team? Who else do you have in your corner helping out? And what's in store for next year?

JL: "It's a great team to be on. Team boss Richard Clarke is very supportive and yeah I'm staying with them and moving up to the Big Wheels for next year.

"Richard-Mike Jones and Ashley Wilde from the RMJ Academy are my trainers and with Ash out injured recently he has been able to help more with the push I needed. Adam Wells is my mechanic and Scott Probert at Innovation Fitness UK takes care of the physical training. Thanks guys because I couldn't have done it without your continued support. Stu Summers has also helped me out this year with my suspension set-up which has been great all year. And thanks to Jon Giffard from MBO for sorting my engine out."

Rage: Looking at the BYN series – in a close tussle with Jack Grayshon for third place – is that third place finish your next goal? And how do you like the last three circuits to run in the series? Are you a fan of hardpack or does it not matter?

JL: "Yes my next goal is third place in the BYN. I'm not a fan of hardpack but I will do what I have to do

and race to the chequered flag."

Rage: Apart from the BYN how does the rest of the season stack up and finish off?

JL: "I'll be doing the MX Nationals rounds and hopefully if I can talk my dad into it I would love to do the Weston Beach Race."

Rage: Thanks for all that Jack. A free shout for Team Lindsay now – is there anything else you would like to put out there?

JL: "I finished school in October 2015 to be home educated and it's not as cushy as people think. I don't get to spend all my time on the Xbox or anything – that's all banned until after school hours. I have a personal tutor that I do lessons with and go to Scott Probert for fitness training two or three times a week. On top of that there's usually two days with RMJ Academy. It's hard work but it's all starting to pay off."



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